Encounter

Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER & MELVIN J. LASKY

D. W. BROGAN
Lessons of a War

KENNETH ALLSOP
Ignazio Silone

A. P. LERNER
Wasted Billions

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The Rightists

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Overwhelming Question

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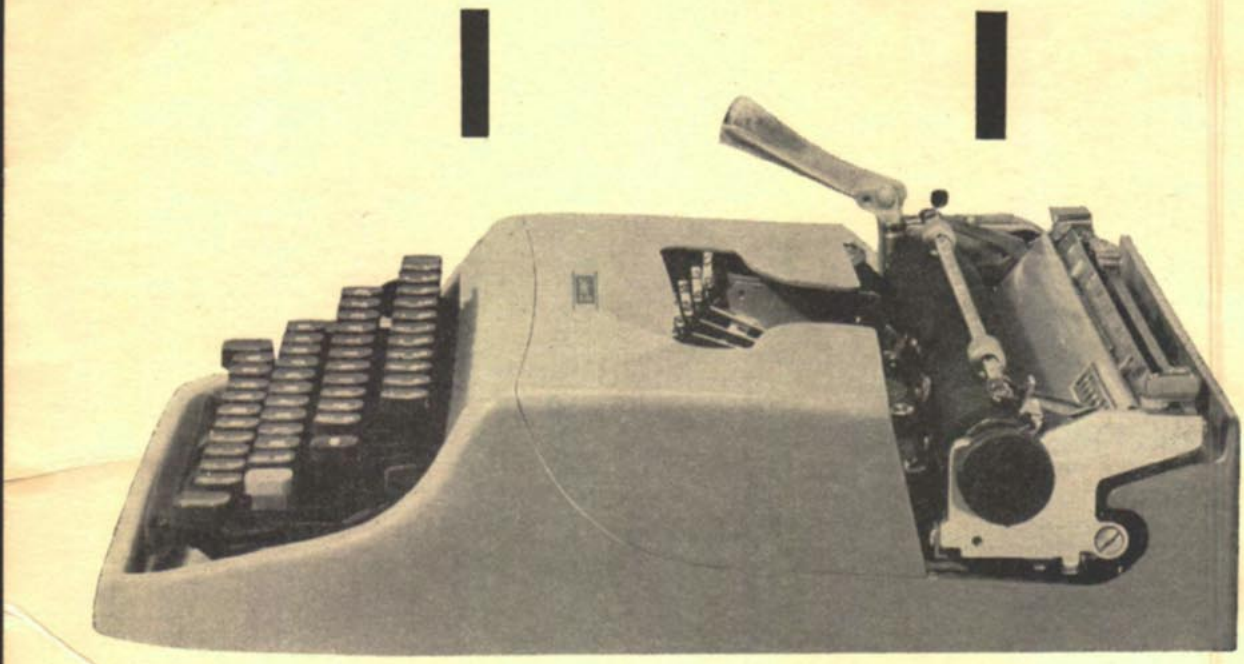

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Edited by STEPHEN SPENDER *and* MELVIN J. LASKY

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Arnold Wesker

The Secret Reins

"Centre 42"

In 1919 three trade union leaders formed a triple alliance in order to make demands for improvement from the government of the day. The government was Lloyd George's, a great war had just been waged, the state was involved in industry and therefore vulnerable. The trade unions were the miners under Robert Smillie, the Transport & General under Robert Williams, the Railwaymen under James Henry Thomas—the most formidable industrial alliance in British Trade Union history. The threatened strike would have succeeded, the state machine would have crumbled, but the strike never happened. Lloyd George's appeal to the three leaders was shrewd, true, and memorable:

> ...you will defeat us. But if you do so have you weighed the consequences? The strike will be in defiance of the government of the country and by its very success will precipitate a constitutional crisis of the first importance. For, if a force arises in the state which is stronger than the state itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state, or withdraw and accept the authority of the state. Gentlemen—have you considered, and if you have, are you ready?

In May, 1956, the English Stage Company mounted the first production of a play called *Look Back in Anger* by an unknown playwright named John Osborne. It was a play of protest and criticism, a landmark in the history of English theatre that a weary, cynical, and hungry generation were waiting for. Osborne found many social targets to attack. Here is one of them:

> [Of Brother Nigel] Well, you've never heard so many well-bred commonplaces come from beneath the same bowler hat. The Platitude from Outer Space—that's brother Nigel. He'll end up in the Cabinet one day, make no mistake. But somewhere at the back of that mind is the vague knowledge that he and his pals have been plundering and fooling everybody for generations.... But it wouldn't do for him to be troubled by any stabs of conscience, however vague. Besides he's a patriot and an Englishman, and he doesn't like the idea that he may have been selling out his countrymen all these years, so what does he do? The only thing he can do—seek sanctuary in his own stupidity. The only way to keep things as much like they always have been as possible, is to make any alternative too much for your poor, tiny brain to grasp. It takes some doing nowadays... but he'll make it alright. And, what's more, he'll do it better than anybody else!

The door was kicked open and an angry flood of writing and social protest poured through. At the basis of this protest was the attack on the philistines of all classes. Philistinism bred that sort of indifference upon which politicians could build their pious plans for wars; that indifference over which commercial enterprises of the nation could unite in barefaced, emotional exploitation. Many voices, from university professor to painter, contributed to the new thesis and the voices were so loud and intelligent that surely it meant a new force was arising in the state. A social "strike" seemed imminent from such a multitudinous alliance! The strike has not happened.

To-day, five years later, nothing has moved. The crust has shifted a bit, a number of people have made fortunes out of the protest and somewhere a host of Lloyd Georges are grinning contentedly at the situation. No one had actually said, "For if a force arises in the state [status quo] which is stronger than the state [status quo] itself, then it must be ready to take on the functions of the state [status quo], or withdraw and accept the authority of the state [status quo]." In Great Britain those words have no need to be uttered—understanding them is second nature to our society. All protest is allowed and smiled upon because it is known that the force—economically and culturally—lies in the same dark and secure quarters, and this secret knowledge is the real despair of both artist and intellectual. We are paralysed by this knowledge, we protest every so often but really the whole cultural scene—particularly on the left—"is one of awe and ineffectuality." I

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am certain that this was the secret knowledge that largely accounted for the decline of the cultural activities in the 'thirties—no one really knew what to do with the philistines. They were omnipotent, friendly, and seductive. The germ was carried and passed on by the most unsuspected; and this same germ will cause, is beginning to cause, the decline of our new cultural upsurge unless . . . unless a new system is conceived whereby we who are concerned can take away, one by one, the secret reins.

THE PERSONAL question now arises which many artists ask themselves: should *we* work out that system? It is a question I ask myself. Is it my responsibility as an artist only to analyse and complain?

> . . . Do you know what I finally discovered? It's all my eye! This notion of earning an honest penny is all my eye. A man can work a whole lifetime and when he is sixty-five he considers himself rich if he has saved a thousand pounds. Rich! A whole lifetime of working in a good, steady, settled, enterprising, fascinating job! For every manager in a restaurant there must be twenty chefs terrified of old age. That's all we are—people terrified of old age, hoping for the football pools to come home. . . .
>
> . . . So you know who come along? The slop singers and the pop writers and the film makers and women's magazines and the Sunday papers and the picture strip love stories—that's who come along, and you don't have to make no effort for them, it comes easy. "We know where the money lies," they say, "hell we do! The workers've got it so let's give them what they want. If they want slop songs and film idols we'll give 'em that then. If they want words of one syllable, we'll give 'em that then. If they want the third-rate, blust! we'll give 'em that then. Anything's good enough for them 'cos they don't ask for no more!" The whole stinking, commercial world insults us and we don't care a damn. Well, Ronnie's right—it's our own bloody fault. We want the third-rate we got! We got it! We got it! . . .
>
> . . . That's right. I don't *have* to do anything —except pack up and go home. We're none of us what you could call returning heroes, are we? If only we could squeeze a tiny victory out of it all. God, there must be a small victory, somewhere, for one of us. . . .
>
> . . . And the horror is this—that there's a wall, a big wall between me and millions of people like him. And I think—where will it end? What do you do about it? And I look around me, at the kitchen, at the factories, at the enormous bloody buildings going up with all those offices and all those people in them and I think, Christ! I think, Christ! Christ! Christ! . . .

THESE ARE WORDS given to the characters in my plays. They are not simply bits of dialogue designed to give body to the work, not simply ideas I hand on indifferently to those characters. They are thoughts that have seared across my mind. What must I do now? Is it enough to write them and help them on to a stage? How must I conduct the rest of my life? Have holidays in the South of France, amuse my friends at parties, rear children, vote, give talks on theatrical history? What can those words have meant to me if that is all I do once they are written?

Let me say straight away that that is all I would like to do—visit the world, learn more about my craft, write more plays. What would be the point? The problem which underlies all my work is the philistinism that breeds the sort of indifference that causes the sort of tragedy that engages me as a writer—and that work is only seen by the few people who already know what I'm talking about. It is an incestuous circle—must I accept this? I would dearly love to; I would give anything to be able to convince myself that as an artist I can do no more than ply my craft and trust that the little ripples my pebble has caused will grow in ever-widening circles. I cannot convince myself, because I know, like many other artists and intellectuals that, secretly, a host of Lloyd Georges are waiting to dismiss me as ineffectual; because I know that soon, along with my contemporaries, our work will be discarded as a fashion, having only been seen by a tiny portion of the population, no "harm" will have been done and the remaining fashion-conscious, élite public will be eager to devour the next sensation. I try to console myself with the fact that all art is an aristocratic pursuit—I agree with John Whiting and Benn Levy—that only a percentage of society has aristocratic tastes; the rest will always be philistines. Then I am nagged by another doubt—do we really know how large that percentage could be? Have we the right to organise society on the assumption that there are only a few aristocrats?

> DAVE: *Don't* moan at me about visions. Don't you know they don't work? You *child* you—visions don't work!
>
> RONNIE: They *do* work! And even if they don't work then for God's sake let's try and behave as though they do—or else nothing will work.

I cannot give my characters words like this and then simply enjoy flattery for being a clever playwright. Living would be less complicated if I could, but I cannot.

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NEITHER am I alone in feeling this. If this new movement has excited us to rebellious words it has also increased our sense of frustration, for we know that rebellious words are not enough.

The answer might have been in the work of the Arts Council had this council been able to rely on its income from any but a philistine government. Even then I am not convinced that they would have known how to clothe themselves in any but the most forboding and rarefied garments. As it is this council receives only £1½ million to spend on the arts which remain—in the words of their 1959–60 report—a "novelty" for this country. The sculpture of Henry Moore, the painting of John Bratby, the plays of Shelagh Delaney, and the poetry of Christopher Logue are "novelties"! The Arts Council, through no fault of its own, is powerless. By 1961 it had thrown control to the wind and used a language which clearly indicated its plight. Consider the first sentence of their 1960–61 report: "An encouraging feature of the *effort to sustain the arts* in Britain..." [my italics]. What a humiliating picture that conjures up—the effort to sustain the arts! What happened to the protesting voices? Had the seductive germ reached them or had they humbly learned and accepted the lesson that they were powerless to take over the authority of the status quo? The Lloyd Georges continue to grin. Somewhere there is an answer.

Let us look, again, very simply at the problem. There is not enough money being spent on the arts; even if there were there is no longer the tradition—and we'll assume there once was—within which the arts are considered a normal function in society and the artist has a right and proper relationship to the community. Raymond Williams asks the pertinent question:

> The question is not who will patronise the Arts, but what forms are possible in which artists will have control of their own means of expression, in such ways that they will have relation to a community rather than to a market or a patron.

It might be possible to find the money if we could find a way to re-establish the tradition of art in society and return the artist to a rightful and respected position.

The question still remains: is it the artist himself who must find this way? I am not sure whether he should, I only feel that he has no option if he really wants to see a change. The new wave of writers has brought with it a new team of impresarios, many of whom are progressive and have had experience in community projects. These are the people, the organisers, who should have taken on this responsibility. As it is they have simply entered the commercial race on the principle that "if we want to see a change then we must use the same weapons as the people we stand against"! We can rely on these people for little—as artists we must either listen to Lloyd George and accept the situation *without complaint*, or effect the change ourselves. I think CENTRE 42 has discovered a way to do this and in assuming, full-time, the directorship of this organisation this is my way of answering "yes" to the question "Should *we* work out that system?"

IN ORDER TO EXPLAIN CENTRE 42 we must look at the problems confronting another movement—the trade union movement. They have a problem similar to that of the artist: the problem of an indifferent public. The members they have are losing interest in "the literature of the rule book and the arts of negotiation" and the cry is going up from old members that "there are no young people to take our place." The way in which they are beginning to answer this problem is to hold "Trade Union Weeks"—a mixed bag of events from lectures on the industrial health service to mannequin parades and folk-singing evenings. CENTRE 42, with a Council of Management consisting of leading trade unionists and artists, aims to establish a cultural centre to exist not merely in its own right—to play to audiences in the area where it is situated—but in such a way as to be able to assist, for example, Trades Councils to mount something more than a recruiting drive. Here, in the form of a recruiting week, is the first opportunity to step out towards a new and wider public; why not make the recruiting week the occasion for a festival provided by the trades council for the community? From that point we could move on to festivals under the auspices of a borough or county council, a large housing estate, a vast factory. A whole new tradition could begin.

We must stop thinking in terms of starting simply another little artistic project which makes a slight crack in the granite wall; instead we need a concept broad enough to bypass the granite wall and start a tradition that would continue to grow on its own; and—this is important—a tradition that will not have to rely upon financial success in order to continue. We

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need to think in terms of future generations, of creating for them a climate in which the arts are a natural part of their existence; so that if this generation did not respond to what we were doing, the next one might. It should not matter if festivals are mounted and attended by only a hundred people in the first year. We have all too often failed in patchwork schemes and accepted and retreated under the sneers of onlookers who have measured achievement by a full house. Art must not ever have to pay for itself, it must just happen: it is an experience not a commodity.

Before we had a chance to set up a base, the CENTRE 42 itself, we had a request from a tiny, worried trades council in Wellingborough asking us to help them mount a festival. Without money and organisation we accepted the challenge and the result proved a landmark. A handful of trade unionists worked with a handful of artists and created a festival out of nothing. It was not a particularly significant cultural event but it was a lesson in co-operation and an indication of what could happen. Since then we have been requested to mount six festivals by other trades councils all over England. It should not be necessary to point out the implications and potential of this situation—a movement of people's festivals seems possible. The artist co-operating with the trade unionist could easily prove a meeting out of which is built the new tradition. The concept behind CENTRE 42 cannot be so wide off the mark if this many trades councils in so short a time have responded to our ideas. One thing is certain—there are now no excuses to lament about indifference. We have complained about apathy and a section of the community has said: "Right! We hear you. We agree to have a festival and involve our members. What can you do?" A challenge has arisen and it seems that this is the moment when the artist can take control of his own means of expression and his own channel of distribution. The opportunity has been offered, the multitudinous voices have been heard. Shall we say to Mr. Lloyd George —we have considered and we are ready?

THERE is one major drawback: we are not taking over the state and the resources of a state. In other words we have taken to the battlefield with only small arms—we have some money but more is needed, perhaps from those who have made a fortune out of protest! It is a problem but at least the position is clear. In 1962 there will be six festivals, we shall commission a new play for them. If the money can be found to make them work then for 1963 there will be many more requests and we shall commission a new play and a jazz oratorio! In 1964 a new play, a new musical work, and a vast mural for a housing estate. All this for festivals run by councils representing a community and not for London's commercial power-houses.

If this is an answer that seems all too easy it is because, in theory, it is based on a very simple framework. A CENTRE that will be a pulse, creating work for a series of festivals. The problems of organisation are enormous but we have the experience of Wellingborough behind us, and the raising of funds will be difficult, but the concept remains simple. Neither is it a concept that can be left to discussion and judgment in erudite articles. A generation must pass before we can make judgments. The cultural world is continually talking and arguing about itself and its problems—a body fascinated by its own complexity. Those of us associated with CENTRE 42 feel that in working there will be no time for the game of despair and recrimination. The festivals are a challenge—the people who were considered philistines may not be philistines; perhaps there may be more aristocrats than was imagined. No argument in the world could or should prevent us from trying to find out.

After all, what can we lose? We can only work ourselves to exhaustion's edge—there are many years left to recover. We cannot make bigger fools of ourselves than we must already appear—our quiet wise dignity fools no one. Lloyd George grins and knows we are ineffectual. To nod at his sagacity and gently bow to his having won the round again and again and again and again is to be sick. No wonder the artist is not really a respected person in society—he is paid lip-service to but he accepts the role of clown—even the Arts Council is forced to admit that he is nothing more than a novelty—he can be dispensed with. John Osborne is not a rebel, he is a sensitive light-meter that society carries around in its pocket. Every so often he is brought out and held up to make sure that there's not too much light coming in. This is true of us all—not one of us, yet, is exempt.

Snarl, smile, or scowl how we like, gifted though we be with the responsibility of a God's insight, we are, at this moment, a harmless wave of nothing but luke-warm, delicate air.

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Peter Taylor

An Overwhelming Question

"I DON'T understand you, Rudy. We've known each other all our lives, and if we can't——"

"We have not known each other all our lives, Isabel," he said flatly.

They were a comical pair at such moments. Her speech would suddenly become littered with diphthongs and elisions. His became hard and flat. A foreigner listening in at these moments might have supposed them to have grown up in two different regions of the country. But as a matter of fact, she had merely assumed the more specially feminine and he the more specially masculine form of genteel, city speech as it is spoken in the great heartland. And it signified no more than that they had reached an impasse in some kind of argument. Of far greater significance was their reference to how long they had, or had not, known each other.... Sometimes it was she who said they *had* known each other all their young lives, and sometimes it was he. Neither of them ever meant to say it, but in the heat of argument the untruth would sometimes slip out. Not very often, but sometimes. Otherwise, it was acknowledged between them that they had met only a few months before they got engaged. That was what was real and true. Other Isabels and other Rudys whom they had known at fourteen, at sixteen, at eighteen (and even earlier than fourteen) had no connection with the grown-up and matured Isabel Havens and Rudy Banks.

Last winter, the grown-up Isabel and Rudy had fallen romantically and passionately in love at a Hunt and Polo Club dance. They said yes to each other a few nights later (to each other and to what a lot more than just each other) and very shortly now they were going to be married—in three days' time, to be exact. Their bond was in their present and in their future. Any memories they had in common—old awarenesses and unawarenesses of each other, growing up as they had in the same town—were more like memories that each might have shared with some other boy or girl, or, still more likely, with a succession of others. Looking back from twenty and a little beyond, all that part of life seemed utter nonsense and not to be thought of as in any way real.

"I just don't understand your attitude," Isabel said, trying to begin the present argument all over again. But again words failed her. For a full minute they stood there not saying anything. Rudy pretended to go on looking at the pieces of Danish glassware that had come in recently. (Isabel's mother liked grouping the presents in kinds, and as their treasure had accumulated during the past eight weeks, Mrs. Havens had managed to make this room look more and more like a well-ordered coupon store—one for royalty, or even celestial beings.) "Lately," Isabel finally managed to continue, "lately, Rudy, you have treated me like a leper. A mixture of a leper and a lunatic. Or a pet that might bite you if you didn't watch out. I am just fed up with it."

Gently he took her hand, and she at once lifted his hand to her lips and kissed it

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fervently. "Right now," she said, "even your hand is as cold as ice."

"It's cold in *here*," Rudy Banks said, shivering.

She dropped his hand, and moved over to the wall and turned up the thermostat. The room was in the basement of the house and had its own gas-fired space heater. It had been the laundry once, but a dozen years back Mr. Havens had converted it into a rumpus room for Isabel and her playmates. More recently, Mr. and Mrs. Havens themselves had used it for a card-room on hot summer nights. And now all the furniture except the ping-pong table had been stored away and replaced by saw-horses with planks laid across them. The improvised tables and the ping-pong table and the built-in shelves held most of the wedding treasure.

From the thermostat, Isabel looked back over her shoulder at Rudy. He was fingering the Danish glass again, but his eyes were trained on her. When the gas jet in the heater flickered on, she saw him smile and shake his head. She said: "You'll be surprised how fast it will warm up."

"You *are* a wastrel," he said. "We'll be back upstairs before the blower comes on." He knew all about such heaters.

"I don't think we will." She turned to the door that led to the basement corridor, and closed it.

"Isabel," he said, "honest to God!"

"I'm serious this time, Rudy," she said.

"You aren't serious. You may think you are, but you aren't." He tossed his head back and laughed, as though that would show her she wasn't serious. "Look where we are," he said. "Just consider what the possibilities are. It gives me goose bumps to think about it. All this glass! And the cement floors!" The room was lit by a single bright globe in the centre of the low ceiling. The crystal, the china, the silverware winked at them from every surface and from the open shelves. From the far end of the room, two brand-new television sets gawked. And in a nearer corner crouched an outdoor cooker, brandishing its copper and stainless-steel accoutrements.

"If I'm not serious now," Isabel said, "you'll never see me serious."

"Don't talk boloney," he said.

"It's not just talk."

"Boloney," he said, still smiling. He was not going to be drawn into more talk. If he had managed this long, he could somehow make it the rest of the way. She was really incredible, but he was confident that in another moment or so he could make her see what a ridiculous place and time she had chosen for *this* onslaught.

She moved towards him along the aisle between the tables. "Now see here, Rudy. We've been engaged for three months. We've——"

He raised three fingers and shook them at her. "And we'll be married in just three days from now," he said.

She drew nearer. He retreated around the corner of the heavily laden ping-pong table. She laughed, but he didn't feel any safety in it for him. She wasn't conceding anything. She was merely humouring him in his playfulness. He went round to the other side of the table. As he turned the corner there, his jacket brushed against a sherbet glass which fell against one of its companions and gave off an elegant tinkle.

"You'll break something," she said sharply. "You know what a clumsy ox you are." It was a sudden change in tactics on her part, but he recognised it. She was really very clever. She would make him angry, and then there would have to be a reconciliation. Then anything could happen, anywhere.

He leaned across the glassware between them and gave her a glittering smile. "You know how much I love you," he said. "Why are you so silly and persistent? You know I am not going to let you have your way."

But she had lowered her eyes to the table. She didn't seem to hear him, though of course she did hear him. She was thinking that probably she *wouldn't* have her way. She could feel the blood rising in her cheeks. And she was blaming herself for not realising weeks earlier that he was consciously opposing her. What a dupe she had been! How she had let the time go by! Oh, the

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evenings they had idled away! The opportunities they had passed up! The kisses she had wasted....

THE SPACE-HEATER'S fan came on—the blower. He heard its soft whirr and then almost instantly he felt the new warmth on his ankles. It seemed to him that probably she *would* have her way. For there she stood, opposite him, a picture of maidenly surrender—surrender to his refusal, which made her doubly irresistible—her eyes cast down so modestly, all her features in a gentle repose he had never imagined they had resort to, and her face and neck and even her bare shoulders pink with blushes. The warmth about his ankles rose to his knees. Or was he only imagining it? No, it kept on rising. He thought of what it must be like to drown—half with horror, half with pleasure he thought of it. And now he imagined that the whirr of the heater's motor was coming directly from Isabel herself. He knew she was going to look up at him in another moment, and he supposed there might be tears. Then he *would* drown. If she wept—he had never seen her weep, not this Isabel—then it *would* be settled.

Afterwards, he realised that she must have heard the footsteps before he did, and that that, somehow or other, was why she never looked up. It was the first of the arrivals amongst the dinner guests, and they were on the basement stairs. Isabel's mother would be sending them down; everybody who came to the house had to see the presents. Rudy sprinted on tiptoe down the aisle between the tables, threw open the door to the corridor, pushed down the thermostat, sprinted back along the other aisle to Isabel. Taking her in his arms, he kissed her passionately. He observed, with relief, that there were no tears on her cheeks.... That's how they were when they were discovered by the utterly delighted first arrivals.

It was a fine party that night. After dinner they all went dancing. Rudy and Isabel were rather quiet throughout the evening. They held hands a lot, and kissed frequently. But they were noticeably abstemious. Some of the young men in the party had a great deal too much to drink, and one of the girls did. She was Isabel's cousin who had come from out of town for the wedding and was staying at the Havens' house. When they returned home at half-past-two, Isabel was forced to take charge of her cousin and see her up to bed. Rudy and Isabel said only a quick good-night at the doorstep.

HE TELEPHONED at eleven the next morning—from his office. Isabel was not at home. Her cousin was still asleep, but Isabel had risen an hour earlier and had gone out by herself for a drive in her car. Rudy talked to the maid first, but Isabel's mother got on the upstairs extension and dismissed the maid. Mrs. Havens said she felt she must take this opportunity to tell Rudy that she detected a "mounting nervousness" in Isabel, and she hoped he understood it was only to be expected in a bride as "the great day" approached. He did, he did—he assured her—he did indeed. And *she* wasn't worried, was she, by Isabel's going out for a drive? He hoped not. He didn't think she ought to be.... Heavens, no, she wasn't. But with so much going on she was merely afraid she mightn't find another chance to speak to him privately, etcetera.

A few minutes later, Rudy stood watching them bring his car down on the elevator in the parking garage. He drove eastwards a few blocks and then turned south. He had no particular destination in mind—no particular purpose. But the car seemed to know what it was doing. Was he in flight or in pursuit? he wondered. Or by keeping in motion was he trying to stand still? After last night, she might be capable of coming to his office—just barely. On the other hand, if he were in pursuit the town had grown too large during the past five years for him to think of looking for her. And it was not as though they had a trysting-place. That wasn't in Isabel's line; Isabel was a born homebody! Suddenly he began to laugh rather hysterically at his own unexpected *bon mot*—a homebody, and he only managed

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to check himself when he saw two men in another car eyeing him curiously.

Half an hour later, he came on her car—her long yellow convertible—parked on the edge of the golf course and near the seventh green, in Riverside Park. . . . God, he breathed. What was she thinking? Those moonlight picnics! . . . "Get your big toe out of the egg sandwiches." . . . Snipe-hunting and all that. . . . Jesus, sweet sixteen! . . . Did she—could she—think those times in Riverside Park meant anything to him or to the other boys who went along? Had the other girls thought so too—that those playful, necking-party picnics were *something*? It seemed an eternity since he had ever thought about that summer, the summer when he had come home from college and decided to try dating some of the younger girls. Had she actually been amongst them? Yes, he could see her sitting very near the edge of the bluff above the River and holding on to a beer bottle and trying to yodel. And possibly he was the only one near enough to her to observe that the bottle, which she finally hurled down towards the river, was still almost full of beer.

He parked his car alongside hers and got out. There seemed to be no one playing the course. He set off in the direction of the seventh green, walking south and parallel with the bluff. The only sign of life was a man riding a big power mower several hundred yards ahead. The grass he walked through had already been cut, and blackbirds and pigeons mingled indiscriminately in the area. Each time he approached them, the blackbirds rose up and moved further off. The pigeons waited till he was in their midst. His only feeling was one of boredom. Such stupid, ugly birds they were. What had they to do with him? What had re-visiting Riverside Park to do with him and Isabel? . . . He went on, despite himself, knowing she would not be glad to see him. . . . Though it was May, the sky was like pale wood ashes, with only a white disc of a sun showing through the overcast. Along the crest of the bluff, a growth of young scrub oak and sweet gum saplings hid all view of the great muddy river that was below. As he walked, he kept watching for the opening—the break in the growth. He knew it must still be there, and at last he saw it. He stepped through, and out on to the little point of eroded, red-clay earth.

SHE WAS SITTING very near the edge with her plaid coat spread out beneath her, and she had on tan Bermuda shorts and a white cardigan. She looked up at him, not so much in surprise as in disappointment. Moreover, her glance accused him. Now it was he, wasn't it, who—by finding her here—said they had known each other all their lives. But no, his raised eyebrows replied, it was she who said so by being found here. He sat beside her on the plaid coat. Two hundred feet below them, down the clay bluff, the ugly, red-brown river laboured energetically and senselessly. It spread before them, half a mile wide. The flat landscape to the west of it was still victim to the last of the spring floods. There were islands over there with shapes like continents, familiar looking but unnameable continents. It was a scene they both felt they had always known and never known.

They were a solemn pair, sitting there; they had met this morning in a region where they were dead to each other, where they must not and could not be otherwise. . . . One summer he had thrown pebbles at her window! No, it was a lie! But he had.

"Are you up there?"

"I'm up here."

"Coming down?"

"Have to get dressed."

"I'll be on the steps."

She was thirteen, and it was almost midnight. But he was only a neighbourhood boy, and their families were such friends it didn't matter. And he was so much *older* than she was. Why, she was a child. It was like having a little sister or even a little brother to talk to. He did not like her or dislike her. She was merely an excuse to keep from going on home. When he came pebble-throwing at her window he had always been somewhere else before. Probably he had spent the even-

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ing talking with boys his own age and older about whether or not one ought to go East to college, about when and whether-or-not the next war would come, about careers that would take them to Africa and South America—conversations that ended with somebody's saying: "I'll do anything so long as it takes me away from this hell-hole." And then on the way home, he stopped to throw pebbles at the little Havens girl's window. She and he would sit on her porch steps and chatter for half an hour or so. With her head of tight, black curls, and with her lean, freckled face, and with no figure at all yet, she looked as much like a boy as a girl. It amused him to talk to her. It touched him, somehow. To think that two years ago he had been that young! Poor child, she had not begun to live. But he! Africa . . . war . . . college . . . I'll do anything so long as it takes me away from this hell-hole!

What he did not know was that at thirteen she was already a Roman Catholic nun. She was sent by her family to the Methodist Sunday School every Sunday morning, but that did not alter the larger fact. And at fifteen, the summer of the necking-party picnics, she was soon to be the successor to Maria Tallchief. It was one of those secrets that had to be kept from those about you. *They* said it sounded so childish in a girl who was already having dates. She had at least to try to seem like the other girls. She even made fun of her dancing lessons. But she knew her worth, and she pitied people like Rudy Banks. Such boys were attractive to her, naturally. She even envied them. They asked so little of life and were able to live for the present moment only. (She knew about the really wild girls that boys like Rudy went out with sometimes.) But how would life be bearable without some high purpose like her own? . . . That was at fifteen. At seventeen, her purpose was more practical, she thought, and again more selfless. Her destiny, she knew now, was to become a social worker. Her heart went out to unwed mothers and prostitutes. She read serious articles in magazines. Boys like Rudy Banks were amusing still, but she knew it was a type which the society of the future must eliminate. Such men brought about the downfall of the very girls she was going to devote her life to helping. After an evening of dancing in the arms of some Rudy Banks or other, after sometimes allowing herself to be kissed by an especially ardent admirer, she felt she could hardly wait to be released from these demands which her life made upon her. It all seemed very degrading and to no purpose.

What she did not know, of course, was that when she was seventeen and Rudy was nineteen he was making a fateful decision: Should he become a nuclear physicist or a professor of political science. . . . That year passed, and by the time he was in law school, two years later, Isabel was engrossed in her serious Junior League work. That year they were thrown together on several occasions and talked openly, not specifically to each other but in groups which included the other, about their absorbing interests—law and charity work. They typed each other. He heard that she was still a puritan. She knew about his affairs. But it was to be still another year before they really met. By then they were properly prepared for the meeting. Rudy Banks had finished school, and Isabel Havens had finished her Junior League apprenticeship. The time was at hand, the time for each of them to meet the right someone, to fall desperately in love, to get married. They were a sleeping beauty and a sleeping prince waking, conveniently, at the same time and in the same place. It would have seemed a profanation of the miracle to say that in their long sleep they had dreamed anything sweeter or nobler than the love which they were created for and which was going to light them through the rest of their waking life. Whoever said so was a liar.

During the half-hour that they sat together looking at the wide river and its false islands, they spoke little. There were no kisses, and he didn't even take her hand till they rose to leave. The things that they did say were only simple things that touched

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on the dreariness of the scene. It seemed wrong, they said, that a brown river could not be thought as beautiful as a blue river. But the simple truth was, it couldn't. They wondered how it might be to have grown up beside a blue river with water so clear that you could see right down into its depths, a clear river in a well-defined channel cut between white limestone bluffs and with possibly a little green island in the centre, very real, and possibly, even, on that island the ruins of a small castle for the eye to focus on.

THAT NIGHT'S party was out at the Hunt and Polo Club. The hostess was Rudy's Aunt Polly—his somewhat youthful, not unworldly Aunt Polly Norris. The guests were a mixed lot. There were Isabel's attendants, of course, including her cousin from out of town, who bored everybody with her remorse and her total abstinence tonight. But the party was made up mostly from a rather frolicsome, riggish set that Rudy felt particularly at home in and from a somewhat less youthful but even more frolicsome set that his aunt belonged to. Isabel's parents, as well as Rudy's own, decided, wisely, to spend the evening at home. They said there had been so much festivity already, and there was so much to be done to-morrow and the day after, etcetera, etcetera.

It was a fine party, like all the others. There was dancing on the glassed-in terrace after dinner, which was served at ten—after drinks, which were served at seven-thirty. The little combo that Aunt Polly had hired finished playing at two a.m., as agreed upon, and departed. Before three, most of the young men, mindful of office desks that awaited them just six hours hence, dragged their young ladies away from the scene. And by that hour most husbands and wives from Aunt Polly's set had taken their leave—together or separately. Aunt Polly herself had already slipped away.

Isabel and Rudy wandered into the little corner of the lounge that the combo had occupied. It was just beside the door to the terrace, and it was banked with giant potted plants. They sat down together on the piano bench. They were holding hands, and without looking at Rudy, Isabel lifted his hand to her lips and kissed it—kissed the back of the hand, then the fingers.

"Hey now!" he said.

"Yes, hey now," she said, smiling to herself, still not looking at him.

"This morning in the park——" he began.

"In what park?" She went on, smiling. "Have you been meeting people in the park?"

"Oh," he said. "No, not I. Have you?"

"I slept all morning," she said.

"I was at the office."

"Well, then."

"Let's walk some," he said.

"Yes, let us do so." He realised that she was faking tipsiness, and an inspiration came to him.

The bar was at the other end of the big lounge. They set off in that general direction. They moved through a cigarette smog, in near darkness. Off at the drear edges of the room a few sad, last table lamps were still lit. In the mammoth fieldstone fireplace, some last embers sputtered and sent up a feeble show of sparks. But in the central gloom, Rudy and Isabel had to pick their way amongst tables and chairs without always knowing whether the chairs, or even the tables, were occupied by one or more persons. As they drew near the bar, they passed one final little company sitting upright around a table. Someone in the group said: "Look at 'em. They're walking on air."

Someone else said: "They think they're in love."

"What do you mean *think*?" said the first voice.

"I mean *think*"

"What are the odds?" said a new voice. "Has he or hasn't he?"

"It's always even money."

"Not in this case. For if he hasn't, she's the only woman under forty at this party he hasn't."

"Are you speaking from experience?"

"I'm not under forty."

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"Well, she's pure as the snow."

"It's always even money."

Hand in hand, they had moved on to the bar. They smiled at each other. He even bent forward and kissed her on the lips. Then, almost under his breath, he said to the barkeep, "Two whiskeys and water—heavy."

The table behind them was silent. Presently the barkeep set two bronze-coloured drinks on the counter. A long, low, breathless whistle came from the table. Not-in-this-case said: "Look, he's going to slug her. That's the most loathsome sight I've ever seen."

And walking-on-air said: "With the wedding only the day after to-morrow—*really* only to-morrow now!"

Isabel looked at the drink before her on the counter, and then looked at Rudy. He gave her his glittering smile. How artless he was. Oh, how she loved him for his artlessness. She knew all about him. She loved his thinking he could use the same smile and the same drink for all his purposes. She knew who it was that had slugged her cousin from out of town last night. She knew how he and her cousin had spent that twenty minutes when he escorted her to make the long-distance telephone call to her own fiancé back home. She believed still that all that was all right for him. She believed still that she had made a mistake in her self-denial; her heart, or her mind, was still set upon remedying her mistake, upon breaking the solemn resolution which some other Isabel, in one of her other lives, had made for her. That was still her fierce, firm purpose, her overwhelming necessity even. And now something strengthened her resolve. As Rudy's smile faded, she saw a look in his eyes that was unbearable to her.... She *would not* serve his purpose. She would not allow him to keep the resolution made by another Rudy Banks. She would not, on their wedding night, be there merely as his idealised something or other.

She took his arm, without ever touching the glass set before her—and without his having touched his, and led him away into the gloom.

"Did you see her face?" said a voice at the table.

"Beautiful!" said another.

"Oh, God, now I've seen life's other face," said a man's voice. It would have been difficult to distinguish which amongst the other husky voices were male and which female. "I've seen it," the man's voice said. And then, after a moment, the same voice was giving utterance to a chain of muffled, broken sobs.

"Get hold of yourself, Doug," said a voice that was distinctly a woman's. "You're not that far out."

Two chairs scraped on the stone floor, and the barkeep was relieved of his neglected drinks.

ISABEL steered Rudy in the direction of the nearest door to the glassed-in terrace. When finally they stood in the doorway, Rudy drew back. There was more light on the terrace than in the lounge, but it had been deserted by the guests. He pulled her away from the doorway, and they walked in the light along the edge of the lounge till they reached another door leading to the terrace. Isabel stepped out on to the terrace alone. Rudy leaned against the door-jamb and watched her wandering about out there. She had never seemed more maidenly, never more womanly, never more desirable, never more precisely the very girl as she must be. He did not know why it mattered so much to him, but at any rate he knew that it did. He no longer regarded himself as a serious person, he had long since come to think of himself as a kind of clown and to think of his life's most serious activities as clownish acrobatics which he was peculiarly well qualified to perform; but there remained this one last absurd point of semi-seriousness. For it, he was willing to risk Isabel's most indignant and righteous rage. He was, in fact, determined to risk it now, in the light of her will to use him in the way she so clearly intended, her will to have her cake and eat it too, her willingness to make him the battleground of her conflicting purposes.

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On the terrace, Isabel peered out through the glass walls and then gazed upward through the glass overhead. "It has cleared," she said breathlessly. "Stars are out."

Rudy burst into laughter.

Isabel seized the latch on one of the panels in the glass wall and threw open a door to the outside. She gave one little shriek of laughter. It seemed half in response to Rudy's laughter and half in response to her first breath of the night air—half anguish, half delight. Without looking back at Rudy, she ran out-of-doors.

"You can't go out there," he shouted after her, quickly crossing the terrace to the open door. "It's all a mess!"

THE MESS outside was a very real one. The Hunt and Polo had moved its location during the previous fall—very late in the previous fall. And there had followed such a severe winter and such a wet spring that almost no work had been done on the grounds. Members and their guests still came and went, between the asphalt parking area and the front entrance to the clubhouse, over a series of rough planks laid across the mud.

From the doorway to the glassed-in terrace there were not even any planks. When Rudy reached that doorway he saw Isabel bounding off through the mire with her white evening dress pulled up about her knees. He gave one regretful glance at his patent leather slippers and then set out after her. With his first steps he felt the mud oozing over the sides of his slippers, and it passed through his mind that he, Rudy Banks, might end his days a wife-beater! He might not even wait till she *was* his wife! Why hadn't he thought of that solution before? A beating just might do the trick.

He gained on her rapidly, much more rapidly than he had expected or intended. She was heading towards the woods that began a hundred feet or so distant from the clubhouse. As she approached the woods she was obviously slowing her pace. Suddenly Rudy stopped in his deep tracks. For the first time, she looked back at him. And she, too, stopped. But presently, still holding up her skirt, she began to trot along the edge of the woods where the ground was not so soft. Rudy remained where he was, lifting first one foot and then the other to shake off the mud, the way a small dog will do. When Isabel had travelled about thirty feet she turned in towards the clubhouse again. She was circling back! Before Rudy knew it, she had outflanked him and cut him off from any easy retreat to the terrace doorway.

He glanced to the right and then to the left. Isabel was moving towards him now. In an open space, several hundred feet to his left, was an assemblage of dark objects that he recognised—clumps and stacks and bunches of left-over building materials as well as certain other bulky objects. His choice was between this junk-yard and the woods, and instinct told him that he must at all costs avoid the woods. He bolted for the junk-yard.

The Hunt and Polo's new site was ten miles further from town than its old location, and in conjunction with the move (a very profitable move, the old site's having been sold at a fine figure for use as a new suburban development)—in conjunction with the move the members made one extremely sage decision: they entirely eliminated the role of horses, hounds, and polo ponies from the club's programme of activities, and so were relieved from making any provision for barns, paddocks, kennels, or polo field on the new site. This was a very realistic step and would save them many thousands of dollars in years to come. And to placate a few stodgy members who disapproved, it was resolved that a good many accessories and appurtenances from the old installation should be brought along to decorate the new site and thus preserve some of the old atmosphere. If spring would only come, these ornaments would be duly set up in places appointed for them by the landscape architect. But, meanwhile, they rested with the remnants of lumber and cement blocks in the Club's private junk-yard. And it was in their pre-

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cincts, on this starry April night, that Rudy Banks took final refuge from Isabel Havens.

Once he had entered that area, Isabel had difficulty catching sight of him again. The lumber piles and the stacks of cement blocks were like so many small buildings with dark little alleys of mud between. And much of what was brought from the old club consisted literally of quaint outbuildings and dependencies—a dovecote, a saddle and harness shack, a two-room playhouse for young children, as well as stacks of dog-houses, barrels, feed-troughs and drinking-troughs, even heaps of gates and rails from the old fences—and nearly all of these heaps and stacks covered over with sheets of canvas. Along the muddy passages between, Isabel pursued him doggedly. Or suddenly she did an about-face, sure she would run squarely into him around the corner she had just turned. But he was never there. Soon she ceased to imagine even that she had caught glimpses of him. She could hear the smacking and sucking of his quick footwork in the mud, and now and again she would hear him laughing to himself. She heard him mutter, "God, what's this?" Half a minute later, she heard him say something like that again. And each time, she would presently come on the thing she supposed he had seen or perhaps even stumbled over—first an iron hitching post, next an old mounting block. The noises he made sounded always just around the corner ahead or behind, or just over the nearest bulk of canvas. She never once called out to him, or she did not *think* she did. And she would never know how long she went on stalking him after it was no use. She never lost her confidence that she would find him at last.

He was never certain how close behind him she might be. He could not hear a sound she made, but he knew always that she was back there or maybe just ahead around the next corner. At last, he knew his only safety would be in hiding from her somewhere. He had led her through the whole complex of junk and rubbish, and now was back at the largest pile of lumber. He began to climb. Beyond the lumber he could see the gable of the children's playhouse. The climbing was very easy. He went up and up, ever so silently. Then at the very top, his right foot caught between two planks. Pulling the foot free, he twisted his ankle painfully. He bent over to massage the ankle, hopping unsteadily on the other foot. He lost his balance, and, in an effort to regain it, whirled about, and fell backward. As he fell, the back of his neck came down heavily against the pointed gable-end of the playhouse.

The poor fellow died instantly. His body folded up as though he were a life-sized Raggedy Andy, his two feet flying upward to either side of his head. He slipped, bottom first, down into the narrow crevice between the lumber and the playhouse. It would be many hours before they found him there, and meanwhile the stars shone on his uncovered head and on the muddy soles of his dress slippers. He was wedged in between the rough edges of the unfinished lumber and the smooth clapboard of the playhouse. His neck was broken, the life gone out of his body, but he was safe from Isabel at last, poor fellow.

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Abba P. Lerner

The Wasted Billions

Some Thoughts on Inflation

IN A POWERFUL if somewhat shrill pamphlet,* Graham Hutton properly points out the roots of inflation in stupidity, in mythology, and in cowardice, its evil fruits of injustice, disorganisation, and impoverishment, and the dangers for the stability of democratic society. Indeed he somewhat overdoes this by adding in the evils (or supposed evils) of re-distributive taxation on the questionable grounds that re-distributive taxation, like other taxation, has the effect of combating inflation due to excess demand, and that this bitter (or supposedly bitter) medicine would not have been administered if the sickness of inflation had not been contracted in the first place. However, this extravagance (and some similar ones like the incidental attribution of the fall of the Roman Empire to inflationary overspending and consequent overtaxing) would not be too serious if the whole book were not based on too monolithic a theory of the nature of inflation. It is a theory which provides support for a treatment that seems to me to be more dangerous to democratic society than the inflation it is designed to cure; the fear of inflation turns out to be more fearful than inflation itself.

The theory on which the book is based is that the only cause of inflation is "excessive demand" —too much money chasing too few goods—so that prices are bid up by attempts to buy more than can be made available. "Cost-push" inflation is mentioned several times, but only to be dismissed as an illusion based on a failure to understand that no inflation could possibly take place without an increase in money demand in relation to the flow of goods and services bought with this money demand; if only money demand is kept from becoming excessive there can be nothing to worry about.

But there is very much to worry about. Even if there is not full employment and there is not "too much money chasing too few goods," powerful trade unions are able to raise wages by more than the general increase in productivity in the economy so that costs are increased; large corporations and industrial cartels are able to push up product prices, and they do in fact do so. In such conditions if the authorities by monetary or fiscal measures attempt to prevent inflation by simply cutting down on the level of spending whenever the price-level rises (on the theory that there must be too much spending or the observed rise in the price-level could not have taken place), the result will be to bring about depression and unemployment. They will stabilise the average price-level by reducing spending—until they have engineered enough unemployment and depression to make other prices fall enough to balance the continuing (though probably curtailed) increases in the prices raised by the powerful trade unions

* *Inflation and Society*. By Graham Hutton. Allen & Unwin, 15s.

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and cartels. There is nothing wrong with the arithmetic of the statement that

> any inflation in any period must result from *the rate of flow of money incomes* increasing more than *the rate of flow of goods and services on which those incomes can be spent* [Hutton's italics].

But a cost-inflation can make the flow of money greater than the flow of goods *by reducing the flow of goods*, even if it does not induce the authorities to increase the flow of money in order to ameliorate the unemployment.

Graham Hutton overlooks—or rather denies—this possibility. It may be that he is (rather surprisingly) following those extremely academic economists who mistake an ideal model of a competitive economy for the real world. In a perfectly competitive economy the price of a commodity can rise only if there is excess demand for it because, by assumption, nobody is powerful enough to have any influence on that imaginary perfect market. It may be that he follows those who recognise the problem but believe that an "affluent society" can afford the unemployment which serves price-level stability. There is some evidence that he may belong to neither of these schools but believes that if only the government solemnly swore that it was not going to depart from its policy (of curing inflation by cutting down demand) no matter what degree of unemployment and depression this would result in, the trade unions and the cartels would be frightened into desisting from exercising their power over wages and prices—and so we would have full employment without inflation.

IT DOES NOT MATTER where among these three positions the author is to be found because, unfortunately, none of the positions is tenable. We are simply not in a "perfectly competitive economy"; trade unions and cartels would not (and do not) believe governmental declarations for price stability at all costs; and even if they did, each trade union or cartel would raise its price while demanding that the others behaved. The view that we can afford the unemployment that results from curing cost-inflation or administered-inflation by the cutting down of demand (which is of course the proper medicine for excess-demand-inflation), deserves some more attention partly because it is not simply the result of a logical confusion or an unplausible assumption but a matter of value-judgment, and partly because it can be considered as a justification of what we are in fact to a large extent actually practising.

IN THE United States we have succeeded in keeping inflation to relatively modest proportions at a cost that is generally estimated by economists to run to *$50 billion a year*—the difference between the goods and services we are currently producing and the quantity that we would be able to produce if we operated at full employment. (This would mean unemployment running at 2 per cent—which represents the time necessarily lost in people moving between jobs in a free society that adjusts outputs to the changing preferences of free consumers and investors.) This annual loss would increase both with our increasing productive capacity and our increasing acceptance of an increasing degree of unemployment.

It does seem to me to be unquestionable that a mild inflation does *less* damage than the $50 billion (and it will be more) lost annually in this way. Only a small fraction of this loss would suffice to rectify all the injustices and wastes induced by a mild inflation. This is not to say that we should embrace inflation. We cannot do so because it could not be trusted to remain mild, and this is well emphasised by Hutton. But there are other measures possible that would make it unnecessary to pay the $50 billion tribute. These other measures would, of course, have their costs too. But it is here that a *comparison of the costs* becomes of the greatest importance, involving, as I think it does, our hopes for a free world or even a free half-world.

1. The upward pressure on prices which, if unchecked, forces us to choose between price stability with a $50 billion depression and full employment with inflation, could be removed by checking the inappropriate upward pressure on these prices. This could be done by the imposition of regulations that would make the prices behave the way prices do in a competitive economy. It would prevent prices from being raised or force them to be reduced when there was clear evidence of excess capacity. Such excess capacity would itself have automatically prevented prices from being raised or forced them to be lowered *if* it had been in the hands of competitors who would have no reason for keeping it idle.

2. A similar regulation would have to be applied to wage increases, so limiting them as to keep the *average* wage rising in accordance with

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overall productivity—permitting wages to rise more rapidly than this where labour was relatively scarce but only by as much more as could be balanced by a slower rate of increase (or possibly no increase at all) where labour was in relatively excess supply. It would then be possible to have a policy of providing sufficient demand to maintain high full employment without paying the annual $50 billion of ransom money.

NO DOUBT, the required regulations would appear unpopular, strange, and frightening. Naturally, if illogically, they would be identified with their abhorred opposite, namely *price control*. Price control interferes with the market mechanism by attempting to prevent natural or functional increases in the prices of things that are scarce. The required regulation would interfere only with *interferences* in the market mechanism. It would prevent only such price increases as are due not to genuine scarcities but to the power of cartels and trade unions to raise prices in the face of excess capacity and potential excess supply. It would *restore* rather than interfere with appropriate market prices.

I AM AFRAID IT MAY be a long time before this lesson is widely absorbed. In addition to the intellectual efforts required, there are powerful institutional resistances to be overcome before the necessary measures can become politically practicable. Optimistic economists, therefore, engage in wishful hopes that the problem will solve itself by the grace of unexpectedly great increases in productivity (not cancelled by a corresponding raising of the sights of business and labour and their demands). Pessimistic economists console themselves with the sour-grapes argument that the evils of the regulations, since they may encourage additional state interference and threaten the liberal economy, are greater than the evils of the inflation or depression they might prevent.

I WOULD CONCEDE that if we consider the $50 billion as merely additions to the income of the United States, there is a certain plausibility to the charge that the matter is not of very great importance. Won't it all really go down the bottomless pit of "keeping up with the Joneses"? May it not be wiser not to take on the difficulties and dangers of adventurously new wage and price regulations? There are, however, three considerations on the other side, each of which, it seems to me, has much greater weight.

1. None of us lives any more on "an island." We are living in a world half of whose population, now on the margin of subsistence, has glimpsed the possibilities of a decent life of health and comfort. They do not have the wherewithal to "take off" for the economic development that would make this possible for them—and *a fraction of the output we are wasting* would suffice, in the course of a generation, to put them well on the way to the provision of a decent life for all. If our societies are in need of a worth-while "national purpose," or global objective, or (if you will) crusade, here is one together with the means for its achievement.

2. The crusade refuses to stay on the altruistic level. There can be no long-run stability in the world without satisfying the ambitions of "the revolution of rising expectations." We cannot afford to throw away our historic opportunities to build a viable, less divided world—or will we be as foolish and wicked as to follow the South African formula and depend on military power to maintain an increasing gap between the rich and the poor of the world that will be difficult to distinguish from a division between the white and coloured? This is quite apart from the consideration that the communists are bidding for the dispossessed of the world, and the possibility that we will be needing substantial quantities of the wasted $50 billion for other forms of defence.

3. This may seem paradoxical, but it is my conviction that it is precisely the *acceptance* of the governmental regulation of wages and prices for full employment without inflation that increases the chances of the development of our society along free and liberal lines. If we accept the "engineered depression" as the only practical way of preventing inflation, we will so strengthen the protectionist forces of depressed industries and areas that economic liberalism will be in a very poor condition indeed. The frustrations of unemployment, the fears of the employed, and the difficulties of businessmen, will all multiply tariffs, quotas, escape clauses, and the like. Feather-bedding will proliferate, technical advances will be hampered, and capital investment will be discouraged. There will consequently be less productivity-increase to cushion the inflationary

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the writer will almost always be worsted. The clue has already been given by Mr. Miall, in his reference to "compulsive viewing about the subject." Compulsive viewing, let it be noticed, not compulsive listening as well. "It is not so much show business," Mr. Miall went on, "as 'show-me' business." From the reasonable proposition, made by a writer in *The Times*, that "the essence of television is that it is something to be looked at," the television producer to-day normally proceeds to the assumption that the visual image is what, by itself, matters.

I DO NOT THINK people outside television understand how much, in the making of the kind of programme which is concerned with ideas or facts, content is sacrificed to presentation. Ideally, of course, there should be no such conflict between the two, but almost always there is. Whenever it occurs, it is the presentation, the concern for the picture on the screen, which wins, and it is the producer who has been responsible. It is this, I am convinced, which accounts for what Barbara Ward calls "the nullifying and deadening influence of television," not her suggestion that the programmes are "designed to create and satisfy trivial interests." Most of the producers of the kind of programme I am discussing seriously try to do more than that. That their programmes then emerge as trivial, exciting only a superficial response in the viewers, is due to the assumption, made at every level in television, that it is the picture which primarily counts. The result, night after night, is that the viewer watches something very like an extended trailer of snatches of moving pictures, all of them much the same and all of them of much the same quality. What could be more nullifying and deadening than that?

To take, first, the fully scripted programme. The writer has done his research and written and delivered the script. The producer must then find pictures to illustrate it. It is at this point that the conflict will start. Again and again, the producer will complain that the script cannot be covered by adequate pictures: pictures, in other words, which Mr. Miall would call "compulsive viewing." The script, therefore, must be altered: altered, not in small points, like cutting on a printer's stone for length, but altered perhaps, in its entire emphasis, which for the writer is its entire truthfulness. A point which he considers to be of slight importance, and has therefore written with slight emphasis, almost in a whisper, can easily be covered with good pictures; so that point must be blown up. A point which he considers to be of central importance cannot easily be covered with good pictures: so that point must be reduced until it is barely audible.

IN ALL BUT ONE of the more serious programmes I have done for television, it has been difficult to get my opinions and ideas on to the screen, less because of managerial interference than because of the convention, observed by most television producers to-day, that television is primarily about the quality of the picture on the screen. Significantly, one of the best documentary producers, Mr. Tim Hewat, of Granada TV, is a Fleet Street journalist, who has very little respect for the mysteries of the camera. If a director or cameraman tells him that a particular shot or sequence he wants is "not television," Mr. Hewat will brush them aside. This does not mean that he does not take the trouble to use the camera well: he merely allows other considerations their equal place. He does not assume, as so many producers and directors appear to do, that the camera can think.

Indeed, those documentary programmes which one remembers are always those, like the American report on race-troubles in the South or, again, the American attempt to tell the story of the U-2 incident, in which content has not been sacrificed to presentation, to the quality of the picture, in which the roughness and indistinctness of the picture have not been allowed to count against its other, intrinsic interest. This is one reason why the best documentaries are rarely those which have been pretentiously prepared over months, but those which have been hurriedly put together, as if they were simply journalism.

Indeed, it is the pretentiousness of television which is in danger of defeating its object. The idea, for example, of simply having a face on the screen, telling the story where it cannot be covered by illustrative material, has almost disappeared from television, and with it a lot of its original and potential honesty. If this is bad enough in a primarily narrative programme, it can be disastrous in a programme about ideas. It is almost impossible to illustrate ideas. The result is either that the ideas are reduced to a caricature of themselves, or the viewer is distracted from them by gimmicky presentation. This second is what happened to Dr. Bronowski's last series of programmes about science. He moved about a studio which was so cluttered up with tricks and devices that one's eye was entirely absorbed, and one's mind almost not at all. It was Mr. Maurice Richardson who acutely complained that, by agreeing to these methods, Dr. Bronowski was in fact devaluing the very scientific rationalism which he was seeking to expound, just as I complained earlier

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pressures for higher wages and profits and still more "engineered depression" will be called for to check the inflation. We will have a vicious circle of engineered depression and anti-liberal protectionism reinforcing each other.

THE DISCOVERY of Keynesian economics and the (reluctant) acceptance by the governments of the free countries of the responsibility for preventing severe depression gave the free world a reprieve from the threat of radical social revolution.

The failure of economists like Graham Hutton to recognise the existence of cost-push inflation and its widespread dangers for the world of to-day and to-morrow shows that economists, like generals, suffer from the danger of being prepared only for the war that is already over.

Sick Child

Lit by the small night-light you lie
And look through swollen eyes at me:
Vulnerable, sleepless, try
To stare through a blank misery,
And now that boisterous creature I
Have known so often shrinks to this
Wan ghost unsweetened by my kiss.

Shaken with retching, bewildered by
The virus curdling milk and food,
You do not scream in fear, or cry.
Tears are another thing, a mood
Given an image, infancy
Making permitted show of force,
Boredom, or sudden pain. The source

Of this still vacancy's elsewhere.
Like my sick dog, ten years ago,
Who skulked away to some quiet lair
With poison in her blood: you know
Her gentleness, her clouded stare,
Pluck blankets as she scratched the ground.
She made, and you now make, no sound.

The rank smell shrouds you like a sheet.
Tomorrow we must let crisp air
Blow through the room and make it sweet,
Making all new. I touch your hair,
Damp where the forehead sweats, and meet—
Here by the door, as I leave you—
A cold quiet wind, chilling me through.

Anthony Thwaite

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TELEVISION

The Idiot Box

By Henry Fairlie

A SHORT TIME AGO, fifteen writers were asked by a glossy magazine to say what medium, *in all the arts*, they thought was most influential to-day. Nine of them mentioned television: all of them were agreed that television catches people in "a state of mass inertia," some of them concluding from this that it was a powerful influence, some that it had little real influence at all.

Mr. Robert Bolt was characteristic of the first: "Television, because it demands least effort from the audience. Least effort means least resistance; least resistance, least caution; it puts things into our minds mindlessly, like those machines in *Brave New World*." Mr. N. F. Simpson was characteristic of the second: "I suppose the most obvious answer here would be television, since it has the largest audience; but its very ubiquitousness lessens its effectiveness: people develop an immunity to it, scarcely remembering even the highlights from one week to another." Miss Muriel Spark commented: "The television audience gets largely what it expects or is already persuaded of—and in a sense it is the public who influence the TV art, not the other way round." Dame Barbara Ward talked of "the nullifying, deadening influence of television . . . designed to do nothing but create and satisfy trivial interests."

I cannot myself answer the question, rather agreeing with Miss Sybille Bedford that "I don't think one can really know—at least at the time—what influences whom how much for how long." Too much nonsense is written about the influence of mass media, and people get away with the nonsense because there is no way of checking either their arguments or their conclusions. I will only try to argue—as I did in my article on the Press [ENCOUNTER, January 1961]—from the beginning, from the point at which, so to speak, the stuff goes into the machine; in other words, from the experience of the writer himself within the medium. I am concerned that writers and ideas should be treated with respect; what influence they then have is best left to Mr. Raymond Williams or Mr. Richard Hoggart to discover: they will tell us soon enough.

Television is becoming an important way in which writers can earn their daily bread and butter; and it is what happens to writers that matters to me, not only from obvious motives of self-interest, but also because I believe that the only sense in which it is possible to talk about the influence of a medium like television is to hold on to the simple proposition that a writer should write, and should be encouraged and helped to write, what he wants in the manner he wants, and then, if there is anything important or valid in what he has to say, it will survive and have its influence.

BUT THIS does not excuse me from first saying a word about the mass which the medium addresses; for a mass it certainly is, even though Sir Robert Fraser may claim that "What some regard as the herd, we regard as the human family." Having written previously about the B.B.C. [ENCOUNTER, August 1959], I am here primarily concerned with independent television, and independent television now reaches more than 11,000,000 homes. By the end of 1962, a total of 22 I.T.A. transmitters will cover about 95 per cent of the country.

When we are dealing with figures like this, we are no longer considering a mass audience at all: it has ceased to be an audience, in the sense that one can ever hope to communicate with a majority of it in any but the most superficial way. For this reason, the claims, so soberly made, that it is a potent force "for a broadening appreciation of the more *recherché* arts; for the appearance of a better-informed public opinion; for a prudent scepticism towards party political jousts; for a stimulation of interest in what is going on in the world; for an enrichment of home life," are absurd. Sir William Emrys Williams, for example, has said

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that some of the documentary-type serials, like *Probation Officer*, "provide us with an area of common experience, for the millions who watch are a cross-section of the community, not a class-section." This is hocus-pocus. It is impossible to talk of an "area of common experience," when the audience consists of minds and natures which experience at such different levels, and some which are almost totally inexperiencing. Just because I and a taxi-driver and an estate agent have watched the same programme the night before, I have never found that we have shared an area of common experience: we are just as far removed from each other as if we were discussing an article in *Mind*.

Mr. Lew Grade, the deputy managing director of Associated Television, told Mr. Peter Black some time ago that television had to cater for an audience which was composed largely of people who, after a hard or trying day at work or in the home, wanted simply to relax, and not to be disturbed or worried. The booklet produced by his company, on *Research for Programme Planning*, stated: "It is by no means uncommon to find people simply putting up with a programme for lack of something better to do.... The screen has a strongly hypnotic effect and viewers frequently find themselves just sitting on, programme after programme. This increases the viewing figures."

Mr. Lew Grade and Associated Television should know, and it is surely absurd in these circumstances to talk solemnly of an area of shared experience. Mr. J. B. Priestley was a good deal nearer the truth when he wrote, in the first number of *Contrast*, that in the days when he still used to bother with television,

> I sometimes had a vision of viewers staring idly at the screen, and could hear voices: "Dad, you're wearing those old slippers again" —"Where's Herbert to-night, Alice?"—"That reminds me, I met Mrs. Robinson this afternoon"—"Don't like this chap—look at that long nose."

It is usually possible to assume, when writing even for a popular newspaper, that those who have read the whole of an article from start to finish (and they are usually a small proportion of the newspaper's readers, not to be counted in millions) have been willing to put enough into reading it in order to be able to get something out of it. This assumption can never be made about more than a tiny proportion of a television audience, even though it may watch from start to finish.

This may seem to be a commonplace observation, but I am concerned with the direct bearing which it has on what television asks of the writer. If it is assumed, not only that it is desirable to attract a huge audience, but also that the whole of the programme must be designed to hold that audience, the writer is immediately asked to address himself to its lowest common denominator. This is the normal pressure in independent television, even though there are producers and directors who try to resist it. The programme companies want, as nearly as possible, the whole of the potential audience: not even the greediest of newspaper proprietors look for that.

BUT THE PRESSURES FROM ABOVE are not the worst of it. It is when the writer himself begins to think in terms of holding an audience of millions that the damage is done. For example, in *The Television Playwright*, Mr. Donald Wilson wrote that "all this time, under our very noses, a national 'theatre' has developed, a theatre that already reaches nine million families from Cornwall to Cromarty, a total audience of over half the nation." This is dangerous self-deception. If the writer, whether playwright or not, is honest, he will admit that there is not, and cannot be, an audience of nine million families, of over half the nation. These may watch, but they do not receive. They bring to television nothing of the self-discipline, the conscious application, which make reading, the theatre, and even, sometimes, the cinema an actual experience, and the receptiveness of an audience an active and not a passive thing. An audience of 15,000,000 is an audience of at least 14,500,000 sponges.

The writer for television is, therefore, in a false position from the start. If once the audience for his programmes falls regularly and noticeably below the size of the audience which similar programmes usually attract, he will not be counted a successful television writer. Yet he may still be holding an audience much larger than any other medium asks as a criterion for success. Shakespeare on B.B.C. television, for example, was watched by more than 5,000,000 viewers. He will, anyhow, certainly be holding the audience for which, in any other medium, he would normally be writing. In television this is not enough. He must write for the fictitious audience—fictitious since it has none of the qualifications of an audience—of the ratings.

SINCE THE LARGE CLAIM I have just quoted was made for television drama, it is worth rebutting it on its own ground. With very few exceptions, almost all television plays, on both channels, exist "in the tiny enclosure of intimate domestic drama." Mum, Dad, a married daughter, and a teenage son, or, to vary it, a married son and a

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teenage daughter: the cast is always much the same, and they act out their trite situation, without the situation ever being allowed to appear like a problem, or, at least, a problem which cannot be solved by a little common understanding. "The agonies, heartbreaks, and joys of men and women in a small way of life," one critic has said, "occupy them almost exclusively." There may be several reasons for the triviality of most television plays—small, inexpensive sets, with as few people on them at one time as possible, are an obvious restriction—but there can be no doubt that the main reason is that this triviality is what the television audience wants, and therefore what the companies want as well. It is frightening to wonder how many young playwrights, who might have been forced to wrestle with their talents in order to produce something good enough for the stage, have been promptly and easily seduced by a medium which asks for no standards higher than those of good magazine fiction.

The downward pull of the huge audience may also be seen in Mr. Kenneth Tynan's programme about the arts, *Tempo*. Mrs. Doris Lessing, in her scathing attack on the "Smart-set Socialists," was speaking from her own individual Socialist point of view. But few people would object to her descriptions of the programme as "bland" and "chi-chi." It is smart, from its employment of the Earl of Harewood alongwards; where it intends to criticise, it likes to administer the well-groomed skin-deep shock, instead; it appears to have no confidence in ideas unless they are supported by names. At every point, it not only uses methods, arguments, and gimmicks different from those which the people taking part would normally employ elsewhere—there would not necessarily be harm in that, since they are trying to do a different job—but uses methods which belie both what they are doing elsewhere and what they claim to be trying to do in the programme. The claim made by Mr. Tynan and his collaborators is that culture can be sold to the millions: they are, in fact, proving only that a bright package can be sold to the millions.

WHEN HE WRITES or performs for television, the writer first finds that between him and those whom he is addressing stands the producer. The producer, one might think, is in much the same position as an editor. This is not the case. An editor either accepts or rejects what one has written, makes suggestions for its improvement, and tries to present it in such a way that it will be noticed and even, perhaps, read. The producer's function is by no means so limited. When he receives a script from a writer, it is no more like a programme to him than a lump of clay. He is the potter who then fashions it, with his director, into a presentable programme. Gradually, before his eyes, the writer sees what he had intended for a useful vase turned into a china ornament—for the mantelpiece.

The role of the producer is, of course, not confined to programmes which turn on a prepared script. Mr. Robert Kee has accurately described his influence on programmes which depend on commentating, a form of "writing" on television. A true definition of a producer, he wrote in an article in *Twentieth Century*, "would be 'a producer of harmony between the producer's idea of the way in which the story should be done and the commentator's.' . . ." The implication of this definition—that the producer is judge in his own cause—is only too true. Mr. Kee, dismissing the parallel with a newspaper editor, asked:

> What newspaper editor, in addition to his overall blending function, would insist on accompanying a foreign correspondent on his trip, suggesting who were the right contacts to make here, should be interviewed there and on what, breathing down his neck at every turn and even proposing an occasional phrase as he sits at his typewriter?

Yet the producer who assumes these functions is frequently considerably less experienced than the commentator in interviewing or getting a story, and certainly much less experienced than the normal editor or news editor.

Mr. Kee and I may be considered biased, so let me quote from the other side of the fence. In an article in *Contrast*, Mr. Leonard Miall, assistant controller of B.B.C. television (with special responsibility for current affairs and talks), put the producer's attitude with painful accuracy:

> The major difference between factual programmes and fictional ones in the B.B.C. relates to the role of the writer. In a play, or a light entertainment sketch, or a Western, you start with a script. In a talks programme you start with a subject and an empty screen, and you try to fill the screen with compulsive viewing about the subject. *In one sense the producer here becomes the writer.* [My italics.]

This, as I have said, applies not only to the unscripted factual programme, but to the scripted one as well.

There is, then, an underlying conflict between the writer and producer. That may not seem remarkable enough to call for comment. But it is the way in which the television producer sees his job which makes the conflict one in which

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that Mr. Tynan was devaluing the very idea of culture he was hoping to propagate.

THE TRUTH OF THE MATTER is that in television, and in independent television especially, it is the producer who receives the assignment, and not the writer, whether he is performing as script-writer, as interviewer, as commentator, or as reporter. It is, of course, not only a question of the producer personally, but of the whole production hierarchy. Mr. Priestley talks of the time when

> I was still meeting programme planners and listening for hours to the most elaborate and almost tormenting arguments, into which they plunged like so many theologians and metaphysicians. They split hairs I could not even see. We might have been settling the final doctrine of the Trinity. Whatever faults these characters might be accused of having, nobody could say they lacked interest in their work. Every projected series had to be discussed as if it were a declaration of war or a peace treaty.

It is worse even than that, for every cartwright and wheelwright in the place seems to be invited into the theological discussion.

The writer for television, in fact, suffers much the fate which was described recently by Mr. John Mortimer, in an article about writing for films in Hollywood:

> What finally blunts film-writers is the hopelessness of getting what they write on the screen, and the general idea that scripts should be written like the pyramids were built, by hordes of dishonoured peasants who died one after the other on the job. The fact of being paid a hundred thousand dollars doesn't prevent you from being a dishonoured peasant.

The writer for independent television is invited to be a dishonoured peasant, and the fact that he is paid a good deal less than a hundred thousand dollars does not prevent him from becoming one.

IT MAY BE SAID that I am just not prepared to come to terms with a new and different medium. I do not think this is true. I believe that it is the camera which is not coming to terms with the medium. Far too many of the technicians and even directors in television have come from films, and their attitude to the camera has influenced producers who might otherwise have looked at television as something apart from the cinema, and not just a miniature extension of it. Television is severely limited by time and space: by the time which is available for making a television programme, and by the space, the size of the screen, in which it must be presented.

"All the evidence goes to show," Mr. Miall has said,

> that it is just as easy to hold an audience for a programme based on fact as it is for a programme based on escapism, provided that one is prepared to put into the factual programme all the resources, skill, and the loving care that are put into more obviously attractive programmes.

This may well be true; and the superiority of the B.B.C.'s serious programmes over independent television's is almost entirely due to the willingness of the B.B.C. to spend its resources lavishly on them. Both time and equipment mean money, and the independent companies, when they make a serious programme, are close-fisted with both. (To revert to Mr. Tynan's programme, he has not the slightest chance of challenging the B.B.C.'s *Monitor*, unless he is allowed to build up, like *Monitor*, his own independent film unit.) Both time and equipment, then, are short: it is tragic, therefore, how much time is wasted, how much of the working time of the available equipment and crew, by producers, directors, and cameramen who observe the growing conventions about what a television programme should look like.

If one is filming away from a studio, with, as is usually the case, only one film unit, a five-minute interview which may occupy only three minutes in the programme, can take up to, and even over, two hours to film, if one counts the time occupied in unpacking and packing the unit's gear. This is largely because the interview is expected to run to the already trite pattern of television interviews, and this involves the whole business of what are known as "establishing shots." The point of an establishing shot is, quite simply, to establish that the reporter is where he says he is, and that the interviewer is with the person he is interviewing. In order to get these establishing shots, and also what are known as "reverses," which are pictures of the interviewer putting his questions, the cameras, lights, and furniture will have to be moved and changed at least twice. This is the real point where the waste of time occurs, and all because it is assumed that an interview must *look* like an interview. Actually, it does not even do that: it looks only like a television idea of an interview; and, for this reason, most television interviews elicit very little. It would be far better if the whole idea of television interviewing outside the studio were abandoned and some other form of eliciting meaningful statements were tried.

THESE MAY APPEAR technical points, but they are not. It is technical conventions like these which, at the moment, severely restrict the freedom

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of the writer, when he is operating as reporter or commentator, in handling a story, and the time available to him for doing it properly. What a reporter needs, in handling a story, is extreme flexibility, both in the way in which he uses his time, and in the way in which he puts his story together. As he gathers his information and his impressions begin to take shape, he should be able to change his mind constantly, and therefore change the form of his story, even up to the last moment before it is despatched. This is impossible if, in any way, he is regarded as subsidiary to the camera, and hence the producer, the director, or the cameraman. The reporter must hold the ultimate right to scrap anything that has been filmed, however good the quality of the picture: he, and not the producer, must be able to say: "This is what the audience should hear."

It may seem that this is largely a matter of experience and personality, and it is perfectly true that the best television reporting will be found where, as in programmes like *Panorama*, reporters get accustomed to individual film units, and the film units get accustomed to individual reporters. But, as I have said, it is the convention itself which seriously binds and cripples. Television reporting involves the writer in a constant and, at the moment, usually losing battle to present the facts as he sees them, and not as the producer, the director, or the cameraman sees them. At present, the producer interferes far too much in the selection of interviews and sequences, the director in deciding the way in which they should be treated, and the cameraman insists on imposing conventions which, however relevant they were to the film, are meaningless in the kind of television programme which I am discussing.

As for space, the size of the screen on which the programme is eventually presented, this also, I believe, has a distorting effect on the work of the writer. I have already pointed out that the smallness of the normal stage set in television inevitably encourages playwrights to produce intimate domestic dramas which do not clutter up the set with too many characters. The size of the screen also, of course, imposes the same limitation. The effort of imagination which is required to present a drama which is more than just "a little slice of life" is one which the playwright and the producer do not willingly face too often. I know one imaginative theatrical producer who, for this reason, has not applied for the post of director of television drama at the B.B.C., which at the moment of writing is vacant. He just does not believe that there is much to be done.

What is even worse is when the producer, director, and cameramen exploit the size of the screen, using methods which, however legitimate in the cinema, inevitably and grossly distort on the small screen in a sitting-room. I never watch Mr. Hugh Burnett's *Face to Face* programme, for example, without feeling that I have been seriously misled. Frequently, I have tried to analyse this feeling, and clearly much has to do with the phrasing of the questions. But it has most to do, I have concluded, with the technique which is adopted in the filming: those huge close-ups of faces or, rather, of parts of faces, of a frightened eye, a cauliflower ear, a nose with warts and all. Apart from the fact that most people's skin under such close scrutiny is rather unpleasant, there is only one position and one activity in which any of us normally sees a person's face as closely as this: when making love. I begin to find the unlooked-for experience of suddenly being thrust into bed with Lord Reith or even Dame Edith Sitwell, not only a disconcerting one, but also an intolerable form of wilful seduction.

By showing a person's face as closely as *Face to Face* does, we are invited to draw conclusions which only the intimacy involved in making love can entitle or enable us to do. Even when we talk to a friend standing up at a crowded bar, we are never close enough to see his features as *Face to Face* asks us to do, in complete isolation from the rest of the face, from the movements of his body, from his hapless gestures. Whenever *Face to Face* has presented a public figure whom I personally know, the impression left of him has always been distorting, and usually because of the sensational photography, for which the small screen is not fitted.

Again, brilliant use has, from time to time, been made of filming still pictures or photographs in such a way that they appear actually to come alive: the camera pans across the face of a street or crowd, or it zooms into or away from it. The technique was used, for example, with dramatic effect, in an American documentary about the young Lincoln, in which still black-and-white illustrations of the period were made to look almost like film. It has been used in this country also, in, for example, Granada's programme about the Boer war. In such cases the technique is perfectly valid: the camera is merely trying to make up for the lack of newsreel material.

But the B.B.C.'s *Monitor*, a programme which we are entitled to judge by the highest standards, frequently employs the same technique for filming paintings, with the result that the camera rarely rests on a painting or part of a painting long enough for us to see, far less to

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contemplate it. The commentator at the time is usually explaining how the painter managed to bring his subject alive merely by the skilful use of his brush. This we are not allowed to see for ourselves. The producer, director, or cameraman has decided that the painter needs assistance. No sooner has the camera zoomed into a detail of the Rokeby Venus's ankle than it begins tracking up her legs, and then zooms away just in time to avoid offending the Governors of the B.B.C. It is a long time since a camera just rested in front of a picture hanging in the National Gallery, while Sir Gerald Kelly stood beside it, asking us to look for ourselves for the points he was making. This is a characteristic way in which so-called improvements in technique have sacrificed content to presentation. When techniques like this are used to illustrate a writer's script, whatever the subject, the effect is almost always distorting. The camera rarely makes its point without exaggeration.

IN ALL THAT I have been saying, it is important to remember that I am talking about programmes which are watched in a sitting-room at home, and not in the cinema. In the cinema, the size of the screen, the fact that to get there is in itself an outing, that one is for three hours removed from life outside, that the film is just part of an occasion which includes box-offices, plush carpets, tip-up seats, usherettes, ice-creams and chocolates; all these considerations make it unlikely that the audience will start from the assumption that what they are watching is true. The whole business is more than life-size, outside their normal experience: they may, for the sake of entertainment, willingly suspend critical judgment while they are inside the cinema; but, once outside again, queueing for buses in the pouring rain, that judgment will reassert itself, a judgment which is alert to the differences between truth and make-believe.

THIS IS NOT TRUE of television. Anyone who has appeared on television with any regularity knows how total strangers imagine that they have really met him: they talk to one on buses, smile across bars, shake one by the hand, sometimes ask one to drop in if ever one is round their way. Critical judgment is not alert in the sitting-room: the people on the screen seem like real people, and the viewer begins to imagine that he really knows them, that he has seen a full and true image of them. This appears to me the real danger of the exploitation of film techniques for television. It is inevitable that such techniques should be used and, perhaps, developed. It is all the more important, therefore, that the position of the writer (whether as writer, reporter, or commentator) should be strengthened in television. He is a natural corrective, for the wish of the writer must always be to say of the film which is accompanying his words: "It really is not like that at all."

BUT, OF COURSE, producers, directors, and cameramen are the best people one encounters in television. Behind them are the bosses, those who own and control television. I have already, in a previous article, discussed the B.B.C., and I will be saying little about it here. I should, however, make two things clear. I believe that the B.B.C. has, by and large, been vastly improved, both by the competition of I.T.V., and by the unstuffy reaction of its present director-general to that competition. I also believe that, if once that competition were withdrawn, it would soon return to its old ways —they are evident enough even now—and again become the voice of hieratic opinions. It still is, for example, disgracefully sycophantic to those in positions of authority.

Nevertheless—and this I would not have said before my own experiences of the last couple of years—it is infinitely less degrading to work for than any of the I.T.V. companies. Again, I must make it clear that I still believe that a commercially supported television channel is essential: because it provides real, and not just apparent, choice, real, and not just apparent, competition; because I do not like the idea of a whole medium of communication being under the control solely of semi-State institutions like the B.B.C.; and because I believe that people should, within the limits of the law, be allowed what they want, and clearly a majority of them want what Mr. Lew Grade and Mr. Val Parnell give them. Nevertheless, after working with varying degrees of intimacy with Associated Rediffusion, Associated Television and Granada, I find myself left with the ineradicable impression that they are seldom ready to give first importance to serious ideas and the serious exploration and communication of them.

THE REAL WEAKNESS behind the present I.T.V. set-up, as I have hinted, is that its controllers do not just want four million viewers (like the owners of the *Daily Mirror* and the *Daily Express*), or even eight million, or even the fifteen million they frequently have. They want all viewers. It is true that, for prestige reasons, the controllers of I.T.V. may put on "balance" programmes (to observe the balance laid down in the Television Act), or "Pilkington" programmes (those meant to impress the Pilkington Committee), but they are put on in off-peak hours. The nearest a serious programme on

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I.T.V. comes to gaining a peak-hour audience is between 9.35 and 10.30 on Wednesdays. Otherwise, the serious programmes are thrust into the half-hour between 10.30 and 11.00.

It is true, of course, that even between 10.30 and 11.00 a serious programme may still have a larger audience than the circulation of a daily newspaper. But one may well wonder how much the inert and doped viewer can take in by then. The important thing, however, is the contempt for serious programmes which this placing of them implies, a contempt which constantly affects the writer, the producer, and the director. None of them ever feels entirely free to observe his own standards or his own inclinations.

Granada is here the best example, because amongst the independent companies it has the highest reputation for the production of serious programmes. The characteristic Granada programme is the social documentary. This is a large phrase which, being interpreted by Granada, means that its full-length peak-hour programmes all too often deal with the kind of topics which are splashed in the more popular Sunday newspapers. Whether it is corporal punishment or contraceptives, or hanging or venereal disease, or juvenile delinquency or illegitimacy, the subjects are commonly concerned with violence or sex. They are treated, of course, with a claim to social conscience. But that is the oldest trick of journalism. Even in a programme on the police, with which I was concerned, I knew I (as the scriptwriter) was supposed to give more prominence to crimes of violence, even though none of our investigations had justified such treatment.

THERE ARE MANY WAYS in which Granada's contribution to the growth of independent television has been an important one. But its claim to tackle serious social questions would be more convincing if it more often moved away from the marginal issues which involve crime and sex and tackled, instead, a problem which is central to our society. The influence of consumer advertising, for example, is a subject which should be dear to Mr. Sidney Bernstein's heart, since he is known as a convinced Socialist. It would also be an enthralling visual document, for all that it would need to make its point would be a selection of all the commercials which have appeared since I.T.V. began, almost entirely without verbal comment.

THE CHOICE of subjects is one thing which must deeply concern the television writer. The possibility of exploring ideas is another. The independent companies are terrified of ideas, even more terrified of them than the B.B.C. in its old days used to be. In 1960, for example, I did an hour-length programme for Associated Rediffusion on Berlin. Having argued the point with the producer, one of the most talented television producers who helped to create the idea of the television documentary and is now, therefore, suspected by the companies, I used the hour to present, as eloquently as I could, the case for defending West Berlin. It was a case which, at the time, was agreed between all the three parties in this country. The immediate reaction to the programme by Associated Rediffusion was enthusiastic, but it quickly cooled, and the reason I discovered later: the network of independent companies had objected to a programme which was composed of the straightforward presentation of a particular point of view.

If, in such a case, when my own view coincided with that of the three main parties in the country, a clear statement of that view was not permitted, if the writer could not, which is surely one of his important jobs, explore the humane ideas and choices which lie behind the otherwise remote and inexplicable stands which politicians take, what possible chance is there that a writer will ever be allowed to state his personal views and ideas if they are unorthodox?

BUT I MUST NOT exaggerate. The writer will be allowed to express his personal ideas firmly enough if they are concerned with art, or literature, or music, or sport. He must simply keep clear of issues which involve questions of life and death for millions of human beings. It is to this that the contribution which some of us hoped independent television would make to open and unbarred debate has come.

In the choice of subjects, then, and in the opportunity to present his idea, the writer for independent television finds himself confined to the margins. At the root of the trouble lies the system of networking which has grown up since the Television Act was passed. This networking was not anticipated by the sponsors of independent television, it was not anticipated by the Act itself. It has grown silently, and works silently. Only a few, like Mr. Lew Grade of A.T.V. and Mr. John Macmillan of A.R., know in detail how it works from day to day and week to week. Few pieces of paper, it is said, ever pass between these moguls: much is done by word of mouth, and especially by telephone. Here is the hidden power, as also here is the hidden source of their profits, of the independent television companies.

Quite simply, networking means that the big four companies, Granada, Associated Television, Associated Rediffusion, A.B.C., agree

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to carry each other's programmes. Turn up the *TV Times* for any day, and you will find, no matter where you live, that it reads very like this, taken from one issue.

> 7.00: Granada TV Network Production. 7.30: Granada TV Network Production. 8.00: Associated Rediffusion Network Production. 8.30: Granada TV Network Production. 9.35: A.T.V. Network Production. 10.30: Granada TV Network Production. 11.02: Southern Television Production. (This is from the issue of *TV Times* which covers Southern Television's area.)

On another night, one of the other companies, and not Granada, might predominate, but this, in bare terms, is what networking means.

The original idea of independent television was that each of the companies, operating in different areas of the country, would, by and large, produce and present their own programmes. This was found to be too expensive, and Associated Rediffusion, for example, consistently made a loss. The answer was simple, and was quickly found and then ruthlessly operated. The four main companies agreed to carve up the evening's viewing time between them, and present each other's programmes throughout their areas. This is the basis of the huge profits which have since been made. The cost of a programme to the company which makes it is normally met, and frequently more than met, by the payment it receives from the other companies. This means that the whole of the advertising revenue it receives within its own areas, is, to all intents and purposes, straightforward profit. This is what Mr. Roy Thomson meant when he said that owning a television company was a licence to print money.

BUT EVEN MORE IMPORTANT is that this means there is no genuine competition between them. More important still, it means that any one company can effectively veto the suggestion of another company. (That was the meaning, and the importance, of the network's complaint against the Berlin programme.) Power over all programmes on independent television, in other words, is concentrated in the hands of the few men in each of the big four companies who operate the networking system. When one realises who this means, one cannot really wonder at the standards of independent television. How concentrated this power is may be gathered from the fact, which is common knowledge in the television world, that Mr. Norman Collins, one of the most active sponsors of independent television, and one of the bosses of A.T.V., takes no part in the networking.

As I have said, the system works secretly and silently. But it is, again, common knowledge, even if it is not proved by one glance at *TV Times*, that the network arrangement has been used to stifle most of the independence of the smaller television companies. It is said, and although it cannot be proved by documentary evidence until the Pilkington Committee reports, there is no reason to doubt it, that the four great networking companies, in return for helping the smaller companies, like Southern or Anglia Television, have imposed on them an agreement which amounts to something very like a power of veto over most of the programmes which they carry. For example, soon after its birth Southern Television made an agreement with the Old Vic to present some of its plays. Southern Television could not hope to make such an agreement pay unless the networking companies agreed to carry the plays in their own areas. After a single production, nothing has been seen of the Old Vic. The reason is not hard to seek, and it is be hoped that the Pilkington Committee will make a particular inquiry into this.

Anglia Television, Southern Television, Television West and Wales, all of them legitimate children of the Television Act, of whom so much was hoped, all of them beginning their lives with such sturdy promise and protestations of independence, all have had the life crushed out of them by the network. That Southern or Anglia might experiment, give a writer a chance denied him by the great powers: this was the hope. The reality is that they have been reduced, with few exceptions, to producing one or two advertising magazines, one or two programmes of local interest, one or two programmes about farming or gardening. Networking is not only a licence to print money; it is a licence to curtail the opportunities of writers, producers, directors, of all the artists and technicians employed in the making of a television programme. By the size of their profits, the great independent companies have, I believe, made themselves grotesque; by the use of their power, they have made themselves intolerable to a free country.

I MUST RETURN to the kind of questions with which I began this article. Television is likely to grow in importance to the writer as a way of turning over an—I was going to say, honest—penny. Mr. Priestley has said that "British TV is making the same mistake from which British films suffered for many years. It underpays its writers, and in this respect is like a building contractor who tries to save money by economising on the foundations." I am not primarily concerned with this, although, from my experience as a journalist, there is no

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doubt that, for the amount of time and work involved, the writer hired to work on a script for television is grossly underpaid, compared with what he can receive from a newspaper or a magazine. (I would hardly call writing for ENCOUNTER a highly remunerative form of writing, but it is not much less remunerative, for the time, work, and general wear and tear it takes, than writing a script for a television company which at the end of the year records a profit of more than £6,000,000. Moreover, at least one knows that one's own words are going to be printed in ENCOUNTER, and that is something.)

It is, of course, a lot. No writer with any spirit in him is going to submit for long to the kind of treatment which he receives in television. The constant battle with people who know nothing about the use of words and care little about ideas is, in the end, not worth the candle.

YET, AND YET... television, whether its present influence is large or small, is a medium which will grow in importance, and even if it can never be an active influence for good, it could very well become an active influence for evil. Writers cannot, with an entirely easy conscience, leave it to the moguls who figure so largely in its direction; they cannot, with an entirely easy conscience, let it remain the idiot box. Those who direct it can be fought only from within, by those who work for it, and it is in this fact that the two halves of my article meet. If I am critical of the producers, directors, and cameramen in television to-day, it is because I believe that they need writers beside them to fight the long battle. Production, direction, camera work cannot, by themselves, form the core of hard ideas with which alone it is possible to resist the men who tend to control all mass media. This is especially true when the medium is as young, and has formed so few traditions, as television has done.

If producers, directors, and cameramen agree to employ their own skills in order to subdue the writer, as I suggest too many of them do, the time will come when, as more and more pressure is put on them to conform to commercial standards, they will look round for the writers who can supply them with the justification of alternative standards, and with the ideas which, eventually, are the only reliable armoury against commercial managements. And, in the moment of their despair, they will find that the writers are not there.

All the Tears

You call it much that you took for yourself;
both mine and yours—but you say nothing yet!
You who became the sharer of my hours,
your pleading hovers, heavy as command.
And I must be your shelter from yourself,
receive the blow I know was aimed for you.
For all your faults I give myself as bond;
all the heavy burdens you threw off
as too great now fall on me—all the tears
you ought to weep and which you are not weeping.

Stefan George

translated from the German by Wallace Kaufman

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Alain Robbe-Grillet

By J. G. Weightman

OF THE GROUP of writers who have made their names recently as exponents of that elusive entity, *le nouveau roman*, Robbe-Grillet is the most remarkable. In the space of seven years he has produced four novels, *Les Gommes* (1953), *Le Voyeur* (1954), *La Jalousie* (1958), *Dans le labyrinthe* (1959), and two striking manifestos. In public lectures and newspaper interviews he has proclaimed again and again that the time has come to bring about in the novel the æsthetic revolution that has already been accomplished in music and the fine arts. At first, both his books and his theoretical statements aroused considerable opposition, and he had the honour of being publicly chided by François Mauriac for dehumanising literature. By now he has won a considerable measure of acceptance; he is established as an authoritative figure on the Parisian literary scene, and the English translation of his third book, *Jealousy*, recently awakened admiring interest in this country.

Yet the philosophical implications and the artistic value of his work are not easy to determine. One can waste a lot of time trying to find analogies between him and the other main figures of the experimental trend, particularly since he has gathered them around him at the *Editions de Minuit*, of which he is principal reader. Nathalie Sarraute, Michel Butor, Claude Simon, and others are sometimes classed as a school of which Robbe-Grillet is supposed to be the centre. Actually, the chief resemblance between these various writers is their opposition to the so-called "traditional," "bourgeois" or "Balzacian" novel and the view of life it is said to convey; and even this opposition is complicated, because Butor declares himself to be a passionate Balzacian. As regards their positive activity, each of these experimental novelists has to be taken separately. It is not certain that they admire each other or even read each other's works. Therefore, the study of the others—apart from Butor, who is to some extent an imitator of Robbe-Grillet—has little bearing on the understanding of Robbe-Grillet himself. A further difficulty is that his theoretical statements are much clearer than his actual practice and, in fact, do not refer to the most puzzling aspects of his work. In spite of his readiness to defend his version of *le nouveau roman* in public debate, he seems to me to be reticent about his basic impulses. These I cannot deduce with any confidence from his novels, and I may as well admit the limitations of my approach at the outset. I find his ideas interesting and his French beautifully precise, but I cannot fully respond to any of his novels, at least if I try to read them as novels. Each is enigmatic, and I am uncertain about the quality of the enigma; all the more so, indeed, since Robbe-Grillet himself has declared, rather perversely perhaps, that he dislikes mysteries.

THEORETICALLY, he has two main attitudes which concern, respectively, our view of the external world and our grasp of the internal reality of the mind. The first of these he has expounded excellently in his two manifestos, published in *La Nouvelle Revue Française*,—*"Une voie pour le roman futur"* (July 1956) and *"Nature, Humanisme et Tragédie"* (October 1958). The second he mentions inciden-

Mr. John Weightman, who teaches French literature at London University, contributes regularly to ENCOUNTER. *His most recent article was "The Sorbonne" in our June 1960 number. His essay on Robbe-Grillet—as well as a study of Sartre—will be part of a book,* The Novelist as Philosopher, *edited by John Cruickshank, and to be published this year by the Oxford University Press.*

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tally, without defending it in such a convincing way.

He has never admitted any special indebtedness to Sartre, but he can be placed in the post-Sartrian line of development because of his sense of the alien character of the world and his anti-bourgeois reflexes. When asked about his literary ancestry, he replies: "The first fifty pages of Camus's *L'Etranger* and the works of Raymond Roussel." (Roussel is a comparatively unknown writer who died in the early 1930s and was eccentric to the point of madness.) A scientist by training and more especially an expert in tropical agriculture, Robbe-Grillet shows no signs of wide literary reading, but it seems probable that he was also influenced by Kafka, Simenon, and Graham Greene, to mention only three names that come to mind as one reads his books. Yet he is nearest to Sartre in his obsession with inanimate objects, while going one step further than Sartre in asserting that our normal apprehension of the external world is corrupted by a long tradition of bourgeois humanism. In fact, he criticises both Sartre and Camus (after the first fifty pages of *L'Etranger*) very vigorously for yielding to the sentimentality of the traditional view, when they are in the very act of proclaiming the irreducible nature of the material universe. They are guilty of using metaphors, and in Robbe-Grillet's opinion, a metaphor is either a falsehood or a capitulation.

To speak, for instance, of the "majesty" of a mountain or of a village "nestling" in a valley is to postulate, between man and the material world, an emotional relationship which does not exist, or only exists through an illusion. The mountain has a certain height and a certain form; majesty is a conception foisted on to it by us. The village nestles only if, for a moment, we transfer our human personality to it. Of course, such a metaphorical use of language goes a long way back before the beginnings of bourgeois humanism, and if pressed, Robbe-Grillet will even admit that all language was originally metaphorical. He probably singles out the bourgeois humanist for attack because the confident humanist, more than anyone else, has assumed that the world is man's domain. In Robbe-Grillet's view, this is not so. The material creation just is, independently of man. Language can be used to define it from the human angle of vision, provided we are careful to show that there is no complicity between things as they are and our human emotions. Hence his now famous descriptive passages, which consist of minute definitions of shapes, colours, and distances.

What Robbe-Grillet is condemning is obviously the anthropomorphic use of nature as a sounding-board or a reflector. We have referred to this in English, since Ruskin's day, as "the pathetic fallacy," a term for which there is no convenient equivalent in French. His objection to it really takes two different forms; he sees in it (a) the germ of tragedy; (b) the first step towards the illicit creation of God. He cannot reproach Sartre, the atheist, with any weakness for God, but he can, and does, suspect him of describing the absurdity of the world in such a way that the description itself has the cathartic effect of producing a form of reconciliation. The hero of *La Nausée* lives in a highly dramatic relationship of discordance with his surroundings, and this causes him to make a plentiful use of metaphor. Roquentin deluges the chestnut tree in the municipal park at Bouville with comparisons, all unfavourable but all indicative—according to Robbe-Grillet—of a sort of appropriation through hatred. For him, the general tone of *La Nausée* is one of intense uneasiness metaphorically defined, and therefore accepted with suspicious tragic resignation:

> ... Roquentin's melancholy bachelorhood, his lost love, his "ruined life," the sombre, ludicrous fate of the Autodidact, the general curse of earthly living, may thus seem to be raised to the level of a higher necessity. But in this case, what becomes of liberty? Those who refuse to accept the curse lay themselves open to the supreme moral condemnation: they will be termed "stinkers." It is as if Sartre—who cannot be accused of essentialism—had, in this book at least, carried the ideas of *nature* and *tragedy* to their furthest extreme. Once again the struggle against these ideas has only served to give them new strength.

How far Robbe-Grillet evolved this criticism on his own and how far it may have been suggested by the neo-Marxist critic, Roland Barthes, is uncertain. Before Robbe-Grillet produced any theoretical writing, Barthes had published in *Critique* (July 1954) an enthusiastic analysis of Robbe-Grillet's first novel, *Les Gommes*, which he saw as an original attempt to treat the world without making any concessions to the suspicious softness of tragedy. When Robbe-Grillet came to write *Nature, Humanisme et Tragédie* in 1958, he used an extract from another of Barthes's articles as an epigraph, as if he fully agreed with Barthes's analysis of his work and accepted the programme that Barthes outlines:

> Tragedy is merely a way of retrieving (*recueillir*) human unhappiness, of subsuming it, and thus of justifying it in the form of necessity, wisdom, or purification: the rejection of this process and the search for the technical means of avoiding the trap it lays (nothing is more insidious than tragedy) is a necessary undertaking to-day.

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Other neo-Marxist critics have taken the opposite view that genuine tragedy, which is only possible in the absence of religious belief, is a bracing manifestation of man's Promethean struggle against the unknown. Without entering into the vexed question of the true nature of genuine tragedy, we can assume at least that Robbe-Grillet's objection to the tragic mode is a matter of temperament, quite unconnected with any desire for political action. He has never shown any interest in politics. His anti-tragic conviction is linked with the belief that the tragic softening introduced by metaphor indicates a mistaken contemplative attitude towards the universe.

To put it bluntly, if you begin by using metaphors, you may end by believing in God, because God is no more than the most generalised form of the pathetic fallacy. (Sartre has not borne this out, but Camus seemed to be almost on the point of doing so, in his last book.) In a striking paragraph, Robbe-Grillet reformulates the Marxist and Freudian view that God is a projection of the human sense of mystery, a hypostatisation of the human thirst for an answer to the riddle of the universe. (The passage, incidentally, would make a good philosophical commentary on Walter de la Mare's poem, *The Listeners*:)

> I call out. No one answers. Instead of concluding that there is no one there—which might be purely and simply an ascertainable fact, dated and localised in space and time—I decide to behave as if there were someone there, someone who, for reasons unknown, refrained from answering. From then on, the silence which follows my calling out is no longer a *true* silence; it is endowed with a content, a depth, a soul—and this soul refers me back to mine. The distance between my cry, still ringing in my own ears, and my silent (perhaps deaf) *vis-à-vis* to whom it is addressed, becomes an anguish, a hope, and a despair; it gives a meaning tc my life. Henceforth, the only thing I shall attach importance to will be this false emptiness and the problems it sets me. Ought I to go on calling out? Should I shout more loudly? Should I use a different set of words? Again I try.... I very soon realise that no one will answer; but the invisible presence that I continue to create by calling out forces me to go on forever breaking the silence with my unhappy cry. Soon the reverberating sound begins to confuse me. Spellbound, as it were, I call out again ... and again. In the end, my distraught consciousness translates my exasperated solitude into a high necessity and a promise of redemption.

[1] Sartre has admitted to a comparable revelation through the cinema. He says that the satisfaction of watching photographed scenes helped him to grasp the notion of the urge towards coincidence with being.

ULTIMATELY, THEN, Robbe-Grillet objects to metaphors because they are tragic, and to tragedy because it is a veiled form of religion. One may wonder, of course, whether the systematic avoidance of metaphor does not denote a tension, which might be called a religious fear of religion. More happy-go-lucky unbelievers may risk an occasional metaphor as a means of wry communication with their fellows, without feeling that they are capitulating to the unknown. However, we can recognise Robbe-Grillet's initial endeavour as another attempt to "purify the language of the tribe." He is really trying to abolish the last vestiges of the primitive magic of the Name.

It is perhaps worth mentioning that, as Robbe-Grillet himself explains, this obstinately concrete view of the external world is not entirely the result of a direct vision of things as they are, but rather an effect of the cinema, and would probably have been inconceivable at an earlier period before the cinema or television screen became part of everyday living. He points out that even the most banal film, which merely aims at telling a story, has an unintentional and surprising feature, quite independent of the plot. Conventional scenes, when they are photographed, may take on an unconventional air:

> In the original novel, the objects and gestures which formed the substance of the plot disappeared entirely to be replaced by their pure significance; an empty chair was no more than an absence or an expectation, a hand placed on a shoulder was simply a mark of sympathy, iron-bars at a window merely signified the impossibility of escape.... But now we *see* the chair, the movement of the hand and the shape of the bars. Their significance remains flagrant, but instead of monopolising our attention, seems to be an addition or even a superfluity, because what strikes us, persists in the memory and proves essential, irreducible to vague mental notions, is the gestures themselves, the objects, movements, and outlines to which *reality* has suddenly and involuntarily been restored by the fact of their being photographed.
>
> It may seem strange that these fragments of brute reality unwittingly offered us by the filmed story should strike us so forcibly, when identical scenes in our everyday existence would be incapable of curing our blindness. It seems that the conventions of photography (its two-dimensional character, black and white colouring, the limitations of the frame, the differences in scale according to the type of shot) help to free us from our own conventions.[1]

This explains why, in reading Robbe-Grillet, we so often have the impression that we are not following an action taking place in real life but watching a film, the sound-track of which has gone dead or is working only inter-

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mittently. Here again, his assumption is debatable. Some of us may be made uneasy by the documentary content of filmed stories precisely because the cinema can so easily give enormous significance to a branch tossing in the breeze or a shadow moving over a wall. Artistic documentaries exploit this facility quite shamelessly. Robbe-Grillet is clearly not in favour of such a tendency, but does he realise that the pathetic fallacy may be all the more powerful through being inarticulate, or through being expressed indirectly? You may destroy the illusory "romantic heart of things," jeeringly referred to by Barthes, and yet replace it by an equally dubious form of *lacrimae rerum*, which clings to the surface like a film of dew. For me, Robbe-Grillet's descriptions often have the charm of mathematical spells; that is, his attempt to abolish one form of magic leads to the creation of another.

SOME OF THE CRITICS who have accused Robbe-Grillet of dehumanising the novel may have been exasperated by his elaborate visual descriptions, but what they are really disturbed about is the rather different matter of the absence in his work of any recognisable, traditional psychological content. Both Barthes and Robbe-Grillet pass very quickly over this point, as if its connection with the objective inventory of the external world were obvious. In his review-article on *Les Gommes*, entitled *"Une Littérature Objective"* (*Critique*, July 1954), Barthes merely says towards the end that he is not going to discuss the book as a story, except to point out that

> ...interiority is put between brackets; objects and spaces and the movement of man from one to the other are promoted to the rank of subjects. The novel becomes a direct experience of man's environment without his being able to claim to have any form of psychology, metaphysics, or psycho-analysis with which to approach the objective setting he discovers around him.

Robbe-Grillet, in his first manifesto, devotes only one paragraph to the question of psychological content. I quote it, together with the preceding paragraph, to show how the transition, or rather the jump, is made:

> Thus objects will gradually lose their uncertainty and their secrets, will abandon their false mysteriousness, the dubious interiority that Roland Barthes has called "the romantic heart of things." Things will no longer be the vague reflection of the hero's vague soul, the image of his sufferings or supports for his desires. Or rather, should it happen that things still accept such tyranny, the acceptance will only be apparent, the better to show how remote from it they remain.[2]
>
> As for the characters of the novel, they themselves can admit of a great variety of interpretations; according to the reader's interests, they can give rise to any sort of psychological, psychiatric, religious, or political commentary. It will soon be noticed how indifferent they are to such so-called wealth. Whereas the traditional hero is constantly warped, overwhelmed, or destroyed by the "interpretations" the author suggests for him, and constantly relegated to an intangible and unstable *elsewhere*, ever more remote and indistinct, the hero of the future, on the contrary, will stay put. The commentaries will all be "elsewhere;" compared with his irrefutable presence, they will appear useless, superfluous, and even dishonest.

This appears to be all Robbe-Grillet has written on the subject, apart from ridiculing the traditional notion that it is the novelist's business to "delve deep" into human nature. What he calls "the old myths of profundity" are to be discredited. As for "human nature," he treats it in debate as a comic, outmoded expression; he will counter an objection with the remark: *"Ah, vous croyez encore à la nature humaine, vous!"*

Perhaps he is again going one step further than the Existentialists by amplifying their concept of freedom to the point of saying that a man cannot be defined except as a behaviour pattern at a given moment. To analyse soul-states confidently in terms of love, hate, ambition, or any other such fluctuating abstractions is no doubt to be as sloppy in one's approach to inner reality as one is in dealing with the external world in terms of metaphor. In these internal applications, the traditional vocabulary is even more charged with dubious significance; therefore—Robbe-Grillet might say—get rid of it altogether, show your character in a given situation without committing yourself to any supposition about his inner reality.

He once declared in a newspaper interview that it is not the artist's business to provide an explanation but to create an object, and clearly he wants his books to have the solidity and independent existence of a statue or a picture, which resists any anecdotal or intellectual summary. This is perhaps not as new an ambition as he implies. Camus, in *L'Etranger*, had concentrated on behaviour and had left it ultimately unexplained, and he, one imagines, had been prompted to do this by the example of such writers as Hemingway, who emphasised action and treated cogitation as effeminate and therefore to be missed out. As a matter of fact, all the great novelists, when one comes to look at them

[2] I notice, on translating this sentence, that it adopts the linguistic form of attributing volition to things. A lapse from doctrinal purity?

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closely, are far more descriptive than explanatory; this, it could be maintained, is true even of Proust, who carried the "psychological novel" to the furthest point it has so far achieved.

When Robbe-Grillet denounces the "traditional" novel, he appears to be thinking of the mechanical repetition of worn-out devices by inferior novelists; as far as I know, he has not discussed Proust or Tolstoy or Stendhal. But he is purely "creative," in that he is not interested in the appreciation of other people's work but only in expressing his own vision. And the only aspect of this vision he has explained fairly clearly is the treatment of objects; his characters are mysteriously non-traditional, not only because we are given fragmentary information about their internal reality but also because the whole texture in which they are set is mysterious. We are uncertain about their objective actions, about the objective relationships between them, about the time in which the events are taking place. Each book, of course, far from being an example of "objective literature," is a highly subjective pattern, signed Robbe-Grillet.

IN HIS FIRST NOVEL, *Les Gommes*, Robbe-Grillet has not yet got quite into his stride, and he even allows himself, perhaps inadvertently, a few metaphors. Barthes says he can see only one: the hero goes into a stationer's shop and asks for a very soft india-rubber—*une gomme très douce* (*douce* = soft, gentle, sweet). There are more obvious ones than that: an alarm-clock stops ringing—*avec étonnement sur quelques sons avortés* (with astonishment after a few abortive sounds) and a café-proprietor, reflected in the mirrors of his establishment, is likened to a fish in an aquarium. More important still, the characters are fairly traditional. The café-proprietor might have come out of Simenon, and there are a score of other characters, who are analysed to a certain extent and even hold intelligible conversations with each other. The originality lies in the construction and in some of the descriptions.

The framework is that of the thriller-detective story. A gang of terrorists are systematically assassinating key-figures in the country; not famous men, but important, lesser-known people. The scene is set in an unnamed provincial town, where Professor Dupont, an economist, has been shot at in his study by a hired gun-man. Dupont has only been wounded in the arm, but in agreement with the Minister of the Interior, he lets it be known that he has died of his wound in a private nursing-home. He is actually hidden in the nursing-home and is scheduled to leave for Paris the next day in an official car. The local police are instructed not to pursue their enquiry and are kept in ignorance of the real events. A special agent, Wallas, is sent from Paris to take up the case, but he too, incomprehensibly, is unaware of the real situation. We see the action mainly through his eyes as he wanders around the town trying to pick up the threads. He eventually finds his way into the Professor's house on the next evening, at seven-thirty, which is the time at which all the previous assassinations have taken place. The Professor has arranged that a friend should go to the house to collect some important papers needed in Paris. But this friend has received a threatening letter and has left the town in a panic, so the Professor has to call at the house himself. Wallas, thinking presumably that he is another assassin, fires at him and kills him, just at the moment when the local police inspector is trying to get in touch with him, Wallas, to put forward the theory that Dupont was not assassinated after all, but has just disappeared. The Professor is therefore genuinely killed, although twenty-four hours late. Wallas has shot the man whose murder he was investigating.

There is a marked comic element in *Les Gommes*, which might be taken at first sight as a parody of a detective story. We know from the start that the victim has not been killed, and that the police and the special agent are fumbling in the dark. Robbe-Grillet seems to have set himself the task of maintaining suspense when the solution has already been given. He does this mainly by telling the story from Wallas's limited viewpoint and hinting at mysterious connections. Some of the other characters are suspicious of Wallas, who bears a puzzling resemblance to the supposed murderer. We know that Wallas came to the town years ago with his mother to visit someone. It is rumoured that Dupont had an illegitimate son, with whom he was on bad terms. Is Wallas the assassin and the son? He cannot be, because we have already been introduced to the gunman and the leader of his gang, yet the doubt persists to the end.

The action also involves various loose ends. Wallas is constantly getting lost in the town and coming to a swing-bridge (can the link be *du pont* = of the bridge?)[3] Stranger still, he goes

[3] I have also heard it suggested that the bridge, when down and closed, is a symbol of infinity, because it then allows endless movement. It is true that a raised swing-bridge—and this bridge is often raised—can be profoundly disturbing, because it indicates a break in the continuity of life, and a neurotic, such as Wallas apparently is, must often have the feeling that the thread of intelligibility in life has snapped.

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into a stationer's shop, which happens to be kept by Dupont's estranged wife, and asks for a soft india-rubber of a particular kind. While he is in the back of this same shop on a later occasion, someone else, apparently the real gunman, also comes in and buys an india-rubber.

We are never told why these india-rubbers were purchased and they are not referred to again. They can hardly be symbols, since Robbe-Grillet's declared policy, as we have seen, is to divest inanimate matter of its psychological accretions. Barthes speaks of "the mysterious gratuity of the object which gives its title to the book like a paradox or an enigma." The india-rubbers must be anti-symbols, put in to show that we should not go looking for symbols. The French have a jocular, untranslatable phrase: *Mystère et boule de gomme*; it occurs to me that Robbe-Grillet, engaged on writing a false mystery story, may have indulged in a play on the word *gomme* purely as a mystification, in the hope of teasing earnest academic minds. Or perhaps he was fascinated by the texture of soft rubber and just wanted to describe it, irrespective of the plot, as a painter will put in an extraneous object because of its surface quality. I detect a strongly sensuous note in the apparent austereness of his description of the various types of rubber, and I completely disagree with Barthes, who maintains that Robbe-Grillet's style is "the opposite of poetic writing."

THIS BRINGS ME BACK to a question I raised earlier. When Robbe-Grillet gives a carefully non-metaphorical, or apparently non-metaphorical description of an object, what exactly is he doing? He makes two statements, which may be rather contradictory (a) that he is showing things as they are, shorn of human associations, (b) that he is bringing out their true strangeness. But if things just are, they are not strange. Strangeness is a human emotion. If we were God, creation would not be strange; it would be ordinary to us, co-terminous with us. But we are not God, and therefore consciousness, our awareness of creation, is a perpetual sensation of attempted adjustment and always involves emotion. Robbe-Grillet does not want this emotion to be sloppy or untidy and so, in his most characteristic passages, he rejects all openly emotional words. Yet when his descriptions are good, they are emotional though austere, and successful both for himself and for the reader. When they are tedious, it seems to be because he is doggedly applying his rule of "no emotion" with a literalism that tells against himself; or because the particular reader who is bored does not happen to be fascinated, as he is, by the details he is noting down. The descriptions in *Les Gommes* do not bore me, and I thing it would be easy to prove that all the best ones are metaphorical, poetic, and often humorous. For instance, when Wallas goes into an automatic snack-bar and helps himself to a dish of cold herring, hard-boiled egg, and sliced tomato, there is obvious satire, of a rather geometrical nature, in the vision of identical diners consuming identical sets of food. A separate paragraph, which is in fact a prose poem, is devoted to one piece of tomato; the segment of lovingly described vegetable flesh blooms with comical inappropriateness in the middle of the murder-story.

My objection to *Les Gommes* is that the book is basically frivolous, in spite of the exquisite care that has gone into the writing. The plot might be described as an elaborate open puzzle, full of false trails, blind alleys, and apparently meaningless symmetries. Robbe-Grillet can describe the human, psychological world very well when he wants to, or at least certain incidental aspects of it, but he seems to be mainly interested in building up his complex structure of wilful enigmas and engineered surprises. As a serious novel on the usual level, this structure does not constitute a dense artistic object; the conspiracy, the detective work, the personal relationships are all flimsy. If the book is serious, it is a form of literary nightmare, and such a nightmare would result from, and appeal to, psychological complexities that Robbe-Grillet is not prepared to discuss.

WITH *Le Voyeur*, Robbe-Grillet's personal style of writing is fully established. The title must be a pun on *voyeur*, in the sexual sense, and the act of seeing, but is perhaps not quite appropriate, because the hero seems to be a doer rather than a watcher. He is a commercial traveller, Mathias, who returns for a day to his native island off the mainland to sell watches. The country is not specified; the local money is "crowns," yet the family names are French. We can perhaps assume that we are in Robbe-Grillet's native Brittany and that the exotic currency is just a way of indicating a lack of relationship with contemporary life.

As in *Les Gommes*, the action is circular and seems to be about to take place in twenty-four hours. As the boat is putting in to land, Mathias picks up a looped piece of string from the deck, catches the eye of a little girl who is one of the passengers, and sees gulls floating overhead. These three objects are to occur again and again in the narrative, because they provide links with Mathias's childhood; he had a passion for collecting pieces of string; he once spent many hours drawing a gull in profile; and a girl called Violette has some unexplained meaning for

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him. Once on the island, he hires a bicycle and goes off to sell his wares. Up to about eleven-thirty, his movements are clear, and then again a few minutes later. During the gap in the action, a girl called Jacqueline, who had been minding sheep on a lonely cliff-top, disappears. She is eventually found, naked and dead, at the bottom of the cliff. Mathias, after the break, appears very anxious and does not seem at first to be able to remember what has happened. Gradually we realise that he has committed a sadistic murder, using the string and establishing an equivalence between Violette and Jacqueline, who are interchangeable in his mind.

Or, if he is not guilty, he imagines the crime very vividly and behaves like a guilty person. In spite of making a violent attempt to get back to the harbour before the boat leaves on the return voyage, he arrives too late and has to wait two days longer until the next boat arrives. He gets a chance to sail on a cargo-boat, but does not take it, apparently because he does not want to give the impression that he is running away. During the two days, he returns to the scene of the crime (or imagines he does) to remove some shreds of the girl's clothes and the half-consumed cigarettes that he used to torture her with. It is assumed by the islanders that the girl fell over the cliff and that the waves stripped her bare and the fish damaged her body. Mathias takes the regular boat back to the mainland.

It is impossible to be sure what "really" happens and what is imaginary, since we are inside Mathias's mind, which oscillates between present, past, and future, between the positive and the hypothetical, as if it were a cinema-screen on which various episodes, true or false, were being projected in a jumbled chronological sequence, yet all with equal brilliance. The fact that everything is seen in the same bright light is at first novel and attractive; then, for me at any rate, it begins to pall, because I feel mental reality to be much more complex than the simple snapping backwards or forwards into reminiscence or supposition.

Then again, the structure of the book is ingenious rather than enlightening. All we know about Mathias is that he has an obsession with string, girls—particularly the napes of their necks—and sea-gulls. These motifs occur in different guises, but they do not develop. The figure-eight shape of the loop of string is repeated by two nails in the harbour-wall and by two knots in the wood of an imaginary door; Violette-Jacqueline is, at the same time, a girl glimpsed through an open window on the way to the boat, the little girl on the boat, a girl on a cinema-poster, a waitress in a café, and so on. It may be that a sadistic murderer sees the same few monotonous patterns repeating themselves on all sides; if so, his mind is not, in that respect, very interesting. However, if Robbe-Grillet is working off genuine obsessions, well and good. But my guess is that he has taken hints from elementary psychiatry and is seeing how cleverly he can ring the changes on them. He is again constructing an open puzzle, rather than writing a novel. It is hardly possible to consider Mathias as a character who "stays put" and admits of an indefinite number of interpretations. At any moment, he is what he sees, either in actual fact or in his mind's eye. Most of what he sees merely defines the setting (I say "merely," but these are the best parts in my view, because they often consist of Robbe-Grillet's peculiar brand of prose poetry, which has no necessary connection with being a sadistic murderer); sometimes what he sees is meant to indicate his mental reality, but these indications are rudimentary. If Robbe-Grillet is prepared to suggest a link between a passion for bits of string and a tendency to sadistic murder, he is accepting the beginnings of a psychological theory. Why, then, does he not carry it further? Perhaps because he does not claim to know very much about the inner workings of a sadistic murderer. But in that case, why write a story about one? I can only repeat that he seems to me to be constructing a puzzle, which has some of the peculiarities of a dream or a nightmare.

On re-reading *Le Voyeur*, I am struck by a paradoxical quality of the writing. The descriptions are at once vivid and uncanny, as if there were no reliable links between phenomena. A scene I particularly like is Mathias's lunch on the first day. He is in a café when he is hailed as a childhood friend by a sailor whom he does not recognise. This sailor, with a bottle of wine in either hand, leads him along the seashore to a house where they eat crabs and potatoes boiled in their jackets, served by a mysterious girl with a scratch on the nape of her neck. The sailor is ebullient and incoherent, jovial and yet incomprehensibly cross. At the end of the meal, Mathias gives the girl a watch and murmurs in her ear some words that he himself does not understand (we are inside his mind and the words are not made comprehensible to us). On the sailor's door is the name, Jean Robin, but we have already learned that this person died years before. To me the effect is exactly that of a dream, because it is only in dreams that I see things in patches, with exaggerated realism, accompanied by the sensation that all logical connections have dissolved. I enjoy the episode, I admire the writing, yet I cannot take the passage quite seriously, because after a while I want to wake up and escape from the gratuitousness of the dream. But it must be

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precisely to create this dream-like atmosphere that Robbe-Grillet writes, since it surrounds Wallas's wanderings in *Les Gommes* and recurs in *La Jalousie* and *Dans le labyrinthe*.

IN *La Jalousie*, which shows a still greater novelty of technique, the musicality of construction, already noticeable in the earlier books, becomes clearer. *Le Voyeur* has a narrative in which Mathias's obsessions keep recurring with something like a rhythm, between the initial blast on the ship's siren and a corresponding blast at the finale. *La Jalousie* opens and closes with the shadow of a pillar on a tropical balcony, and has no consecutive narrative at all. It is divided up into what one might call "movements."

This time, so the summary on the back-cover informs us, we are inside the mind of a jealous husband, a colonial banana-grower, who is watching, and reflecting on, the behaviour of his wife, whom he suspects of having an affair with a neighbouring planter. The wife is referred to by her initial, A.; the suspected neighbour is called Frank; the husband has no name and neither speaks nor refers to himself internally as "I." But for the indication on the back-cover, we might have some difficulty at first in guessing that the book consists of visions succeeding each other in the husband's mind. Like Mathias, he is sometimes watching actual happenings and sometimes living or re-living the future and the past in his imagination. Once we have gone through the book, we can reconstitute the story, which is comparatively simple. There is a suspicious air of connivance between A. and Frank as they sip their drinks or discuss a book they have been reading; Frank says he has to go down to the coast on business; A. says she will go with him to do some shopping; they fail to return at the expected time and spend the night in a hotel; perhaps they committed adultery, perhaps not; they come back with the explanation that the car broke down; life resumes its normal course, except that the relationship between A. and Frank now seems less close.

As has been excellently shown by Bruce Morrissette, a great admirer of Robbe-Grillet,[4] the husband's visions are arranged in a pattern of increasing intensity up to the point at which the supposed adultery is imagined as taking place, and then they go on repeating with diminishing force and less coherence until the book stops. Mr. Morrissette does not go so far as to say that the whole pattern of the book is supposed to indicate the rise and fall of sexuality, but this may very well be so. Perhaps it is all the retrospective auto-erotic meditation of a jealous man, who has never made up his mind what to think about his wife's behaviour. More likely, the meditation is roughly contemporaneous with the action. But, in either case, the pulsation is intended to be an important part of the æsthetic effect.

The word "meditation" is really inappropriate, because the hero is not thinking in words, nor is he controlling the flow of images in any way or passing judgment on them. Very precise words are being used to describe the setting and the movements of the characters, but they belong to the author's language, not to the hero's, and their purpose is, ostensibly, to translate as accurately as possible a succession of visual experiences. As in the previous novels, certain objects have an obsessive force; the cubes of ice that go into the drinks are loaded with the ambiguities of the conversation, of which we hear only a few banal snatches; a centipede, which Frank crushes on the wall, is connected with A.'s supposed sexual excitement, so much so that the husband imagines Frank crushing another centipede on the bedroom wall in the hotel before consummating the adultery; the husband's passion for his wife seems to be concentrated in the act of watching her brush her hair. Just as the image of the murdered girl echoes through *Le Voyeur* in various forms, so in *La Jalousie* the sound of the brush on A.'s hair is linked with the sizzling noise made by the centipede and the distant roar of cars and lorries as the husband is waiting for the couple to return.

ALTHOUGH, FROM THE TECHNICAL point of view, these elements are impeccably woven together, the book is, for me, frankly boring, except in those places where I can enjoy the delicious pedanticism of a description, that of the ice-cubes, for instance, or of a constellation of midges. I much prefer a comparable story, such as Somerset Maugham's *The Painted Veil*, written without any technical innovation. Robbe-Grillet's conventions here seem to be strangling the human interest of the situation and creating limitations which are more damaging than those of the "traditional" novel. I had doubts about the bits of string in *Le Voyeur*; I have even graver doubts about the sound-associations between hair-brushing, the centipede, and the motor-car. Once more, Robbe-Grillet is building a structure, which has its own rigidly respected laws, but these laws seem to be ingenious rather than true. Nor can I feel the presence of the husband as a jealous man. Like Wallas and Mathias, he is a sort of numb

[4] *"En relisant Robbe-Grillet," Critique* (July 1959).

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centre to the action. The note on the back-cover says:

> The character has neither name nor face. He is a void at the heart of the world, a hollow set amongst objects. But since all the lines start from him or converge on him, the hollow becomes as concrete, as solid as the objects, if not more.

Not for me, I am sorry to say, even after more than one reading. I would expect a jealous man to argue with himself, to use language to some extent even in his private thoughts, to debate the moral issue, to be tempted even to some degree of inner eloquence by the very fact of his jealousy. Obsessional images connected with personal relationships are surely always accompanied by a fringe of rhetoric, even in comparatively inarticulate minds. Robbe-Grillet has amputated language from his hero's consciousness and has reduced it to a patterned flow of images. The interior monologue has been replaced by an interior film with a few sound effects and an occasional snatch of dialogue. For all the apparent austerity, this may be a facile solution.

At first, one is inclined to think that it must be a difficult exercise to write a novel in the first person without using the pronoun "I." Actually, it may be a way of avoiding the most difficult aspect of writing because it removes the central part of consciousness where value judgments are made. It is this book which should be called *Le Voyeur*, since the hero does not engage with reality at all. Mr. Morrissette claims that he does, because we can deduce from the text that he is present at the dinner-table and makes an occasional remark. However, he is hardly more operative than an observant mute, and although he watches the other two characters they have no relationship with him, or if they have, it has all been left out, as if it were not relevant. He himself may "act" slightly, in an inward fashion; he imagines, for instance, at the peak of his jealousy that the guilty couple have crashed on the road and are being burned to death, but this again is very simple psychology. A pair of eyes, backed by a crude and obvious surge of resentment, is not much of a man.

I should say that the charge of dehumanisation is justified here. Robbe-Grillet's brain is working first on the autonomous plan of the structure and secondly on the meticulous definition of certain portions of the external world. It is not working on the emotion of jealousy; he deliberately leaves off before the point at which Proust begins. Admittedly, he creates "a something which is not the traditional novel," as Geoffrey Grigson has said; I appreciate the technical interest of the "something," but for the rest, I am reminded of Orwell's judgment on Charles Morgan's novels: "The furniture is more alive than the people."

THE LATEST WORK, *Dans le labyrinthe*, is perhaps the most curious of all. The dream-like atmosphere is still more pronounced than before, yet the book opens with a preface stating that it deals with concrete fact:

> The subject . . . is a strictly material reality, in the sense that this reality does not claim to have any allegorical value. The reader is therefore invited to see in it only the things, gestures, words, and events that he is informed about, without seeking to give them either more or less significance than in his own life or his own death.

However, the word "death" has an ominous ring, which is borne out by the dark and brooding atmosphere of the story. The main part of the plot concerns a soldier who is wandering through a snow-covered town at night to find a certain street, the name of which he has forgotten. He is carrying a cardboard box, which he is to hand over to a relative of one of his fallen comrades. He is haunted by a small boy, who keeps appearing and disappearing in the lamplight, like a will o' the wisp. The soldier goes into a private house, a café, and a sort of barracks, and everywhere the air is heavy with foreboding, because the army has been defeated and the enemy occupation forces are expected to arrive at any moment. In the end, the soldier appears to be shot accidentally by a military patrol and he dies after a period of delirium; or perhaps he is still alive and starts walking the streets again.

The book is, in the first place, a conundrum, and since the note on the back-cover does not supply the key this time, we have to guess at a solution. There is an "I" in the story, at the beginning and the end, and here again the conclusion echoes the opening. This "I" is in a closed room where there is a picture of a café-scene, entitled "The Defeat of Reichenfels" and containing some of the characters who figure in the story: the soldier, the little boy, a café-proprietor, etc. The "I" also says at the end that he arrived too late to give the soldier a third injection, so he is presumably a doctor. The only explanation I can think of is that the doctor has been attending a real soldier after a real defeat, and that the body of the book is a dream or day-dream in which the characters of the picture come alive and are fused with the events of his immediate life. The main ambiguity arises from the fact that sometimes we seem to be inside the soldier and sometimes watching him from outside. It is only in dreams

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that we can both watch a person and be that person.

Despite Robbe-Grillet's preliminary warning, some critics at once suggested that the soldier wandering through the labyrinthine streets and carrying a box under his arm was man, lost in the trackless world and looking for God in order to hand back his soul to Him. It is difficult to tell whether the author was flattered or exasperated by this interpretation. In either case, since he had put only a few banal letters in the box, the human soul could not be said, on this view, to be a very precious object. I imagine that he honestly did not intend any allegorical meaning. Like *Les Gommes* and *Le Voyeur*, the book is to some extent a mystification, which is a different thing from an allegory. At the same time, it is, more clearly than the three other books, a prose poem. The themes are snow, silent houses, light and darkness and receding perspectives. The language is not quite so sober as before, because it has acquired a rhythm, and there are some fine bravura passages, in particular a wonderful description of a woman taking fright and disappearing up an echoing staircase. The soldier, the little boy, and what must be the most cherished lamp-post in all literature keep floating in and out of the reader's ken like visions in a crystal ball.

As a "Tale of Mystery and Imagination," the book is undoubtedly a success. I cannot imagine how Robbe-Grillet thought up the details, yet I can see that they all have a compulsive force. But, much as I admire the virtuosity of the writing, I cannot get any general satisfaction from the book, because the structure and the meaning elude my intellectual grasp. Robbe-Grillet might say that this is precisely a proof of its being a work of art, that is an irreducible æsthetic object. I should have to answer that subjective fantasy, however compulsive and however severely ordered according to self-invented rules, may be simply the opposite extreme from the *roman à thèse*. I can only record my, perhaps obtuse, impression that *Dans le labyrinthe* remains wraithlike and, no less than *La Jalousie*, involves considerable tedium.

IF I HAVE NOT completely misunderstood him, Robbe-Grillet appears, then, to be established on two major intellectual contradictions.

He wants to cleanse the external world of the pathetic fallacy and show us things as they are, independently of human emotions. In fact, his descriptions are prose poetry and, in his view of the world, objects are apprehended with an unusual, almost mad, intensity. Although he uses accurate, quasi-scientific language, he bears less resemblance to a scientist than to a painter with a strong, personal vision, such as Van Gogh. The three most characteristic books are like paintings of different atmospheric conditions: *Le Voyeur* shows Brittany in sunlight flecked with clouds, *La Jalousie* has a tropical monotony and rigidity, *Dans le labyrinthe* is a snowscape, dissolving at the end into rain. Because of his minute descriptions, Robbe-Grillet has been called a neo-Realist, and he himself claims to be simply describing that which is. However, his rejection of the pathetic fallacy is not accompanied by any full-scale discussion of the central problem of "realism," which is that all description involves a choice, since no total, or objectively adequate, description is possible. The dogmatic decision to avoid one form of overtly emotive description may be determined by another, although less explicit, emotional attitude. We can only suppose that, in Robbe-Grillet's case, his conviction is related to his anti-religious feelings.

He dismisses analytical psychology as being beneath contempt and argues that the inner reality of a character can be made immediately present by a description of the visual experiences of that character. Yet on the one hand, he borrows occasional hints from psychology while, on the other, the inner reality of his characters, even in an implied form, does not constitute the substance of his books. Their subject-matter is, in each case, an elaborate system of suggestions and correspondences whose deliberate opaqueness contrasts with his positivistic assertions. Since the features of this system recur from book to book—Wallas, Mathias, the unnamed husband, and the narrator of *Dans le labyrinthe* are, in fact, all the same numb, mysterious centre, linked to an abnormally sensitive eye—we can only suppose that in each instance Robbe-Grillet is celebrating some private psychological rite. Perhaps this is why he quotes Raymond Roussel as his master. The reader's appreciation will obviously vary according to the degree to which he can respond, instinctively and temperamentally, to this rite.

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Vernon Scannell

The Great War

Whenever war is spoken of I find
The war that was called *great* invades the mind:
The grey militia marches over land
A darker mood of grey
Where fractured tree trunks stand
And shells, exploding, open sudden fans
Of smoke and earth.
Blind murder scythes
The deathscape where the iron bramble writhes;
The sky at night
Is honoured with rosettes of fire,
Flares that define the corpses on the wire
As terror ticks on wrists at zero hour.
These things I see,
But they are only part
Of what it is that slyly probes the heart:
Less vivid images and words excite
The sensuous memory
And, even as I write,
Fear and a kind of love collaborate
To call these simple conscripts up
For quick inspection:
Trenches' parapets
Paunchy with sandbags; bandoliers, tin hats,
Candles in dug-outs,
Duckboards, mud, and rats.
Then, like patrols, tunes creep into the mind:
A long, long trail, The Rose of No-man's Land,
Home Fires and *Tipperary*;
And through the misty keening of a band
Of Scottish Pipers proper names are heard
Like fateful commentary of distant guns:
Passchendaele, Bapaume, and Loos and Mons.
And now,
Whenever the November sky
Quivers with a bugle's hoarse sweet cry,
The reason darkens; in its evening gleam
Crosses and flares, tormented wire, grey earth
Splattered with crimson flowers,
And I remember
Not the war I fought in
But the one called *Great*
Which ended in a sepia November
Four years before my birth.

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THEATRE

Not a Laughing Matter

By Nigel Dennis

READERS OF THIS MAGAZINE in all parts of the civilised world will be glad to hear that a motor accident which took place at St. John's Wood, London, some weeks ago did not pass unnoticed. A Mr. W. H. Godwin of New Bond Street happened to be on the spot with his camera and was able to photograph not only the broken car and a seriously damaged lamp-post but also the driver (described as "a man") being carried away on a stretcher, his face invisible under bandages. For his photograph, Mr. Godwin received that day's five-guinea prize in "the *Evening Standard* amateur cameraman contest," for which "Entries must be postcard size or larger, and every picture must have a completed form from the *Evening Standard* fastened securely on its back." It is clear that by buying the *Evening Standard* to obtain this form, Mr. Godwin did his bit towards keeping the paper fastened securely on its feet; while in rewarding Mr. Godwin with five guineas, the *Evening Standard* did all that could be expected of it. Civilisation, as this little incident shows, has advanced enormously over the centuries, and where once mutilations, hangings, and the like could be shared only with a privileged public after long delay by means of pencil sketches or purely imaginary "representations," to-day noblemen like Lord Beaverbrook have made the sufferings of others almost immediately available to every man-jack. Moreover, we are now trained, like Mr. Godwin, to hope that we, too, may turn a penny by being on the alert at moments of pain and catastrophe; and there can be no doubt that this training begins, nowadays, at a very early age, teaching even the smallest child to reach for his Brownie when a grandparent falls into the fire and burns to death slowly.

Writers have taken various attitudes towards such forms of human callousness. Tolstoy and Dostoevsky went out to meet it head on, like buffalo charging a railroad. Gogol tried to laugh it off; but it drove him to church. Swift deemed it a normal human condition and declared a preference for thoughtful horses: this was a sentimental weakness, for he refused to see that if animals had brains they would be as brutal as people. Chekhov, like most writers with a comic bent, was appalled by what he saw but determined not to let it break his heart —that is to say, he believed that the very grossness of the enemy demanded the utmost in coolness, skill, and tactics. And so there hovers over all his work a high and delightful spirit of easy amusement, and this spirit represents exactly the distance which the crafty author is putting between himself and his disgust. It is therefore a spirit that is essential to any presentation of his work, for by seeing the tragedy almost always through a mask of comedy we see better, by simple contrast, the gravity and sadness of the situation. Moreover, Chekhov knew very well *how* people suffered—what a brave, light air they put on in face of pain; what absurd lengths they went to to prevent the truth from coming out; what callous, dramatic postures they struck in their efforts to dodge their way through life. It is hard to imagine a happier blending of subject matter and artistic attitude, for in Chekhov the author is standing in relation to human beings at precisely the distance at which they are standing to their mournful condition. And it is this precious film of absurdity and self-deception that producers and actors must protect with their very lives; for if once they lose it, they lose Chekhov. They cannot fall back on fine lines and splendid phrases, for Chekhov did not go in for these; like the later Ibsen, he speaks very plainly and simply, like an anti-romantic saying: "The situation is too painful for poetry." And in proportion as it is painful, it is ridiculous—and the more ridiculous it becomes the more intensely we feel the pain. This is why Chekhov said of *The Cherry Orchard*, "Not a drama, but a comedy; in places almost a farce."

THIS MEANS, by and large, that the producer who fixes his attention principally on the

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ridiculous aspects of *The Cherry Orchard* can scarcely fail to achieve a poignant result. There is nothing paradoxical about this simple fact, which concerns simply a certain artistic method which has been very common in literature since Cervantes. The author, of course, must not fail the producer: he must hand him carefully characters whose farcical behaviour and dishonest attitudes are poignant precisely because they are not only futile and unavailing but because they indicate invariably a missing piece, a loose screw, a personal insufficiency. And when we run down the list of characters in *The Cherry Orchard* we find that Chekhov has neatly cut the Achilles tendon of every single one of them: each person hobbles through life more or less absurdly, using his particular defect as a sort of walking-stick. It is therefore unpardonable to look into *The Cherry Orchard* for some character whom one may single out as being "in the right," or as expressing the author's "own" opinions; for all the characters are wrong in that all are insufficient—and this alone is the author's "own" opinion (he was, after all, a doctor). The leading man, Gaev, is a chatterbox: the only actions he is capable of making are feigned and imaginary (striking nothing with nothing) or sweetly soothing (sucking caramels). His sister, Mme. Ranevsky, is a true sister in that she uses emotions exactly as her brother uses words—that is to say, she prostitutes and exploits the feeling capacity, escaping from both her pains and her duties by pretending to flamboyant gestures and wild agonies. She is, in brief, an actress, a gaudy star, commanding the homage and devotion of those who cannot shine with her selfish brilliance. Firs, the aged manservant, is ridiculous by virtue of being one of those slaves who would always vote Tory if he were obliged to vote, but who would much prefer to be denied the right to vote at all. Yet he is no more laughable than the intellectual Trofimovich, who, as Chekhov makes clear, has remained so immature and stunted that he can declare with pride to his admiring Anya: "We are above love"—a phrase that sums up perfectly the absurd insufficiency of his outlook. Lopahin, the practical businessman, is as hapless in his rise to riches as are the gentry in their decline from riches; he cannot bring himself to marry, and though he knows that there are visions and experiences which promise infinite reward, he cannot imagine what these may be; investment in summer bungalows is the kennel within which he is chained. To add to his difficulties, he is half-hypnotised by the fecklessness of the gentry, as if suspecting that these impractical decadents have glimpsed some vision of truth or beauty which will never be revealed to him.

THESE INSUFFICIENCIES of the principals extend right down to the smallest characters—to the preening valet who prates of Paris and puffs on foul cigars; the eternal governess who plays the buffoon; the stupid maid who is callous to her wooer while boasting shrilly of the sensitivity of her nature: she is as much a peasant caricature of Madame as the valet is of Gaev. Indeed, the sameness of the trick of personal insufficiency would seem somewhat mechanical were it done less well; as it is, we are presented with what amounts to a brisk and delectable dance of equally lamed persons, all moving as in a round: each coming into the foreground to betray his or her characteristic absurdity, then giving place to the others, then coming round again: it is a fine wheel of life, both brief and seemingly eternal, and can run smoothly on the stage only if all its spokes are properly contained and united. Its poignancy is expressed openly by the characters only in the concluding death scene and the sudden moment when brother and sister, forced into recognition of their situation, fall briefly into each other's arms and weep for their lost orchard. Otherwise, there are only the snapping harp-string and the blows of the axe to cut through the comic veil and bring poignancy directly to our notice.

In his production at the Aldwych Theatre M. Michel Saint-Denis has not merely noted this poignancy—which is, of course, as plain to see as Marian's nose or Cæsar's angry spot—but gone after it like a man starved of the more painful emotions. Where comedic briskness is essential, he has supplied infinite reverence; where wit and lightness are in the text (as they are throughout) he has knelt upon them with elephantine sadness. *The Cherry Orchard* is a play which seems short, because it is succinct; but M. Saint-Denis has managed to make it seem at least an hour longer than it really is: we see it as from a howdah, unwinding like a mournful procession of religious dummies. To Dame Peggy Ashcroft falls the horrible duty of playing Mme. Ranevsky with heartfelt sincerity, reducing the lady's enraptured selfishness to stuffy woe.

This performance is fascinating only to those who can relish the impossible oddity of it—namely, that here is our nicest, best-natured star informing Chekhov's fictional and bogus star with all the qualities that most distinguish Dame Peggy Ashcroft. Like Dame Peggy, this Mme. Ranevsky has been absolutely uncorrupted by theatrical life. Her generosity is never irresponsible; it bursts from a full heart. Her villa at Mentone, sold to pay her debts, was clearly a warm homestead with chestnuts popping before the fire, while the debts were the sort that even the most honest woman can

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expect to have when spongers take advantage of her goodness. The husband who drank himself to death *on champagne*—but how can one explain to someone as nice as Dame Peggy that husbands who choose this particular road to the grave are not men of tragical substance, and that the most they should inspire in their widows is a sort of pride at having been so stylishly bereaved? And finally, if one is really devoted to one's aged butler and fears that he is dying, should one not be prepared to devote more than "Five minutes before the train goes" to find out?

BEREFT OF THE STAR round which they revolve—or rather, trying to revolve round a star that has been bereft of all brilliance and centrifugal pull—the remaining characters orbit in darkness. Sir John Gielgud brings to Gaev the unbending fixity of one who fears that it is blasphemous to laugh in church. Lopahin struggles to convey his worship of Mme. Ranevsky, but since that lady is not being played, his conduct appears aimless. The eternal student, Trofimovich, only raises the question of whether this part *can* be played well: is it not an almost impossible part, too puzzling in its problems, too mixed in conception? Of the rest, one need mention only Miss Patience Collier, who brought to the part of Charlotta the governess the spritely style and precision of one who has not only read Chekhov but found him amusing.

WE HAVE NOTED already that the text of *The Cherry Orchard* is not particularly distinguished, and must note now that this production did all that was possible to emphasise the fact, treating the most ordinary lines like long, spun-out fibres of a priceless material. When the axes began to fall and the harp string snapped, we were hardly surprised and not at all affected, for the harp had been plucked interminably ever since the curtain rose, and the axe only signalled the end of a painful wait upon the block. M. Saint-Denis did, of course, recognise that there must be *some* funny bits, but being resolved to spare the principals the wrong of appearing ridiculous, he loaded all the laughter on the butler, the governess, and other lesser characters, thus splitting Chekhov's methodical skull in twain as if it were a mere bole of cherry. A second viewing of the play, two weeks after the opening, showed a certain improvement in this respect, somewhat more humour being allowed to reach the stars—but only on the condition, apparently, that the overall impression of earnest dullness be kept as lengthy and wearisome as before.

The most mournful thing about this crime is the goodness of the First Murderer. The whole civilised world is teeming with directors who regard authors' texts and methods as mere raw stuff to which they must supply the "creative" lustre of their thumbs. Such men assassinate by instinct, and the greater the text the greater their pride in its destruction. But of M. Saint-Denis we may say: "All the conspirators save only he... etc."; for in fastening Chekhov so securely on his back he has been inspired with the same sense of honour and communal duty that Brutus felt for Cæsar. And yet, there lies the body on its bier, as cold as Shakespeare stabbed by Irving. Is it too late to beg M. Saint-Denis to consult the text again and find out *why* Chekhov regarded *The Cherry Orchard* as "almost a farce"? He could then share the secret with Dame Peggy and Sir John—tactfully and gently, of course, for they would find it anything but funny.

Paris Letter

AFTER the vintage years, the ullage. Since the war, I have seen many, if not most of the notable plays, productions, and players in Paris; the best of Anouilh, Sartre, Aymé; the effulgence of Barrault, Feuillère, Brasseur, Fresnay. Time and again Paris justified those of us who look primarily for mind at work in the theatre, for use of the box of tricks in the way Barrault has codified as *"théâtre total,"* though others have used the same principles without the labels.

Now, for the time being, the glorious impetus seems spent. No new Sartre; the new Anouilh and Aymé are tired, minor works; Roussin lacks the touch that once made *Les Oeufs de L'Autruche* memorable; and no new masters are in sight. The younger novelists (indeed, the younger intellectuals) are apparently more interested in cinema than theatre—among them, only little Miss Sagan persists in writing plays, and we will come to little Miss Sagan in due, sad course.

I am told that the decline can be attributed partly to television (there we go again); to late starting-times which deter harassed Parisians; to the high cost of seats and productions; to the way theatre-going has become a middle-class, middle-aged habit, with consequent emphasis on thrillers and boulevard farces.

All of which does not, of course, affect the

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factor of genetic chance by which individual writers or actors of talent may be thrown up, but even the outsider can sense that the general climate in Paris at present is hardly propitious to a vital theatre. The atmosphere inside playhouses seems more lethargic, emphasising the rat-race to the *vestiaire*, and the eldritch rapacity of the attendants: it felt all too appropriately ironical once to hear a Parisian audience, the most congenitally unpunctual in the West, booing when the start of a play was delayed nearly half-an-hour while an advertising film was shown on the curtain.

This, admittedly, is incidental, but I have to report that in Paris this winter I saw acting and production of a standard many English provincial repertories would be ashamed to offer, and a better selection of new drama can be seen on British television any month of the year.

To START WITH THE BEST: by general agreement, the most useful thing Malraux has done as Minister for Cultural Affairs (some say, the only useful thing) was to give the Théâtre de France to the Barrault-Renaud Company. This is one of the three companies which seem to attract young audiences (the others being Vilar's T.N.P., and Planchon's), and to any English playgoer its artistry and dedication must be a tantalising glimpse of what a National Theatre could and should do.

The most recent offering in their current repertoire is the first revival, since its original production thirty years ago, of the least-known Giraudoux, *Judith*. Then it was a failure, despite Jouvet; now it has won respectful acclaim.

Here is a fascinating chance to re-assess the father of modern French secular drama; *Judith* is the only play to which he gave the description "a tragedy." It is in fact an anti-religious tragedy on a religious subject, Giraudoux versus Jehovah—Judith's murder of Holofernes being here not a gesture to save her threatened city, but an act to perpetuate the perfect love they found together in a single night. When the exultant Jews acclaim her, she rounds on them: *"Pour un quart de minute, cessez donc votre fonction de Juifs, qui est d'embaumer le mensonge dans des cantiques!"*

It has the clear, clean, narrative line of tragedy—the rabbis persuade Judith to offer herself to the conqueror, whose henchman disguises himself as Holofernes to receive her (an odd echo here of *Saint Joan*, which Giraudoux must have seen). Judith rejects the efforts of a Jewish harlot to take her place, and succumbs to the wise, witty, world-weary Holofernes (a Giraudoux self-portrait, according to Barrault). Later she kills him and is forced into seclusion by the rabbis for fear she tell her true reason.

There are many fine, characteristic speeches—the patriarch Joseph, refusing to allow his house to be declared a sacred place, preferring it to be found human, and Holofernes arguing that the ordinary sensible man is the true enemy of God. Small wonder Claudel thought the play *"ignoble et blasphématoire."*

YET FOR ALL the style and stylishness, it is somehow hollow: the sense of irony is too strong to permit the strength of passion that kindles tragedy. Perhaps, too, Barrault's style of producing Giraudoux is a touch heavy in a way to obscure the irony while emphasising the lack of passion—for example, at the end a drunken sentry turns out to be the Angel of the Lord, who must ponderously remind Judith of her duty, otherwise, he says, he will lose his angelic seniority. This last touch is surely Giraudoux's typical method of tipping the wink that the Angel's arguments are so much sonorous blether, and the playing should reflect this: Jean Desailly's does not.

Milhaud music and excellently barbaric Max Ernst sets help, and at least the play does not suffer, as apparently it did thirty years ago, from the insufficiency of the actress playing Judith. Not since Feuillère in *Partage de Midi* have I seen an actress move quite so perfectly, so flowingly, as Loleh Bellon. Slim, with long, raven hair, she catches exactly the right saintly-sexual note, and Jacques Dacqmine has the weight and presence for Holofernes.

A notable occasion, then, and one of the best examples of Barrault's gift for conferring classic status on a drama of yesterday or the day before. But is his kind of enterprise a green branch on a moribund tree? I fear it will be precious hard to find anything worth reviving in thirty years' time from among this season's novelties.

THE GREAT DRAW for intellectuals is François Billetdoux's *Va Donc Chez Torpe*, at the miniscule Studio des Champs-Elysées. I take its success to be based on two factors. One is that French play-goers adore symbols, and having recognised something symbolic they tend to be so delighted with their feat of comprehension that they therefore think it all very worth while. The second is that *Torpe* has a Central European setting, and at present the French are fascinated by anything set in an unnamed town, in an unnamed state (preferably Central European and totalitarian), during Time, the Present. I fear I came away more biased even than before in favour of

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standards which suspect symbols unless they can be shown to have validity, and which find characters more real when rooted in actual geographical reality.

François Billetdoux is a thirty-four-year-old actor-author whose *Chin-Chin* was seen in London last year—that was a formless but hauntingly witty, tender, piercing account of two opposites attracted through drink and loneliness. Nothing could be more different than this play. Billetdoux has clearly been ensnared by the Circe theme—Circe being the beautiful Madame Torpe, who keeps an inn outside the afore-unnamed town.

Recently, five people have succeeded in committing suicide at her inn, and a sixth has narrowly failed. A *dummkopf* police inspector arrives to investigate, and questions Torpe's other guests, who include a lonely industrialist, a neurotic African, a lost society girl, and a distraught young mother. There is a great deal of shouting and attitudinising, and when I learned that the producer, Antoine Bourseiller, is a great friend of Alain Resnais, who directed *l'Année dernière à Marienbad*, I understood why there is also a great deal of significant staring in the middle distance.

But as the Joxer would say, what magnificent meanin' jumps out of it all? On the ground floor as a police investigation, it is slow, turgid, unconvincing, and anything but thrilling, for the simple reason that we cannot care about the characters' fates as human beings, because everybody is really upstairs being symbols. But even on this lower level it is poor play-writing —at the end of the first act, the policeman accuses Torpe of responsibility for the deaths, but Billetdoux is so taken with this preconceived and rather obvious stroke that he quite forgets to provide even mildly logical grounds on which this supposedly logical man would have arrived at such a conclusion.

But on the higher level, what does it all amount to? That these are beings who have lost their identities, and see in Circe-Torpe their common denominator and salvation? Even that she is one of those (like *les justes*) who must bear the torments for others? In the end, the boorish policeman was knocking expectantly on Torpe's bedroom door, and I came away with the awful sneaking suspicion that if there is any meaning at all, it is that we must come to terms one wiv another. Perhaps I should have been warned by the fact that Harold Hobson raved about it.

My misgivings were further increased by the way in which the policeman is played by a football-faced young actor whom the programme names as François Billetdoux, and who seems much in love with his author. His acting is noisy, shows no variation of pace, no subtlety. To take an example: the policeman's manners are contrasted with those of La Torpe when he eats in front of her. Billetdoux slobbers and guzzles and burps, and gets through a meal faster even than that other well-known public eater, Mr. Henry Sherek. But does he slosh gravy on his chin, or wipe his mouth with the back of his hand, or pick strands of meat out of his teeth, as this policeman would? No, and he cannot hide behind the French theatrical tradition which requires actors to pour no wine out of an empty bottle and then drink it: the impression Billetdoux gives is of a fastidious feeder impersonating a boor. I do hope he is not one of those superior Frenchmen who sneer at Actors' Studio.

THE SAME FRENCH fascination with Central Europe is reflected with more reason at the next-door theatre where the star production by the Roger Planchon Company is Brecht's *Schweyk dans la deuxième guerre mondiale*. Here for the first time I found myself much impressed by Brecht. The idea is simple and brilliant—put Hasek's First War Good Soldier through the hoops of Hitlerism. Let Schweyk fall foul of the Nazis by speaking his mind, show up their arrogant stupidity by escaping through devices of the grossest flattery; let him eventually be called up, sent to Russia, even meet a mad, twitching little Hitler in the steppes, looking for someone to love him. Throughout, let there be, in proper Brechtian manner, no sentimentality, only humour and comment, and no ending in the conventional sense, because both Schweyk's and Hitler's souls go marching on, and the reason for writing a play like this is to help one to defeat the other.

The Comédie des Champs-Elysées is a big theatre, with a big stage: it imposes poster-colours, but these can be subtle in their rightness. There is a brilliant set, surrounded by movable high concrete light-standards (appropriate in our time for a p.o.w. camp or a football stadium), and the revolving stage serves as the roof of the world in Russia off which Hitler, literally, falls. Schweyk is played with the right Brechtian kind of compelling charmlessness by Jean Bouise, an actor uncannily like our TV comedian Eric Sykes in appearance, and the main production fault is that the amplification system robs the songs of their words.

My feeling now is that Brecht is unlikely ever to appeal in a widespread way to English audiences, but to hear a Paris audience applaud such a line as Schweyk's "I *am* innocent—the proof is, I'm arrested!", is to understand his continuing appeal in Europe.

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AFTER THIS VITALITY, the new Anouilh, *La Grotte*, seems as faded as silk too long in the sun. It begins with the kind of pretence that has an Author appearing to comment on his play (at least he has the wit to mention Pirandello), and there is a remark more give-away than throw-away when he bemoans the rigours of the playwright's life. Anouilh has simply written too much.

The Parisian response has been polite-to-yawning, and Anouilh has certainly deserved well of his public over the year. Not that *La Grotte* is a total failure—there are flashes of wit, and the old Anouilh obsession with the corrupted-virgin figure leads to at least one good scene near the end, when a pregnant tweenie in a big house must choose between honest love and immoral prosperity.

"La Grotte" is the cavernous below-stairs in a fashionable house half a century ago, ruled by a housekeeper who has been the owner's mistress, and who now wishes to promote their unacknowledged son upstairs; there are also several sub-plots, most of which seem to have been designed to keep actors in work with minimum exertion. The two halves of the house never meet satisfactorily, and the whole thing feels like a sketch for a complex social study which Anouilh could not resolve, and tried to get away with under guise of the Author device. Production is slow, the lighting seems bent on saving electricity bills, and there was a moment of awful omen early on when it became apparent that the Author was being played by the dullest actor one had ever seen.

BUT IF Anouilh, most consistent of senior playwrights, was not on form, what to say of the developing form shown by Françoise Sagan, other than that I now understand why at Orly Airport restaurant they serve a glutinous, barely-edible, sauce-covered confection called *oeufs sur le plat Sagan*?

Her second play, *Des Violons parfois...*, is said to have been written in three weeks, which I imagine must be a conservative estimate. It was run up for Marie Bell, and I can only suppose that feminine chivalry impelled Miss Sagan to ascribe to that venerable institution the qualities necessary to play a voluptuous fifty-year-old capable of seducing a handsome young man in his twenties. Miss Bell does all that a wig can do to disguise the mistake, and she speaks the lines cleverly, but she cannot avoid collision with the demands of the part.

Moreover this is, of all bright, fashionable, modern notions, an inheritance drama—it begins, believe it or not, with a black-draped portrait of a Poitiers tycoon in his drawing-room, to which his mistress and her other lover return from the will-reading, furious to find that the money has gone to a nephew. He is a vagrant student, who happens to be hitch-hiking by at the time, and before long one *ménage à trois* has been replaced with another.

It is only fair to allow that much of this is watchable in the same way that Miss Sagan's novels are readable. What depresses is that she takes so little trouble, never bothering to block in solid detail of character and background (who is this nephew? where is he from?), always seeking an easy, pseudo-sensational effect, like the seduction of the old mistress by the young man.

Here and there one senses an implicit plea for the younger generation (Miss Sagan's), suggesting that its uncalculating whisky-and-bed morality is more pure than the first-money-then-whisky-then-bed mentality of its elders—but morality is not a question of Whisky-à-God-God, and by any standards, it seems to me sad that a clever, supposedly representative younger novelist should have produced stuff like this.

But then the theatrical scene in France this winter seems to me decidedly sad, and I hope the genetic factor bestirs itself soon.

Peter Forster

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Desmond Stewart

Carmina Ex Aegypto

Coming to terms

I am in a season of withering of belief:
a youth, I believed that Greece was golden;
somewhere, recoverable were marble fragments:
will them back into heroic being!
Or in the future, coloured metropolis
of harmonious tension, of speed and quiet;
justice and affection soothing destiny,
man linked to man, emotion his artery.
The first was a broken tulip, acrid.
The second was never grown, fabricated.
Now perhaps I am coming to terms
(dictated terms, but terms I accept) with life:
backwards and forwards no illusionary forms
glow: no collective, no corporate relief:
only a diminishing, finite sum of minutes:
particles all mine—but in stringent limits.

From the Arabic of Abu'l 'Ala

1

This world resembles a cadaver
  and we around it dogs that bark
And he who eats from it is the loser
  he who abstains takes the better part
And certain is a dawn disaster
  to him unwaylaid in the dark.

2

Ugly if is heard a lament of mourner
  when arrives my time and I achieve my ending.
Not that I volunteered for the fatal waters,
  but the two youths* were all-compelling.
Of my choice I would not have left my region
  to lie in constriction after free wandering;
Yet I found death controller of all creatures,
  compulsion always on compulsion following.
So don't overvalue human existence:
  in the tracks of my friends I'm passing.

* Night and Day.

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Luxor

Luxor is not luxorious;
at night, perfume and rags;
around, quietly uxorious
the desert presses from its crags.
The palatial hotel is stale;
Edwardiana in 50 years
tarnishes; no glittering peers;
a tourist steamer, ketchup by the Nile.
Germans are the most attentive
pilgrims to the dead.
Dry haunted elderly faces
live oblivious to life in the red
valley, in the hotel lounge, hearing
lectures on corpses and cumbrous rites.
The waiters await no blessing:
packaged tourists pass tipless nights.

Yet ghosts cannot be expelled
of sorrow or of immense cold killings.
Not in the pylons are the ghosts held,
nor in the names of killers and kings.
Poor kings who knew this cleft
between beige and purple,
poor kings of a pyknic people
with strong thighs and deft
swift fingers of creation—
you are names in a guide's patter.
Do Ramses or Kesselring matter?
Life, not narration,
disrupts the desert, hurries
through urged fields where a child is singing
high-pitched to encourage
the blind buffalo, turning, turning . . .

When he was twenty

When he was twenty words tumbled into verses
and all he spoke was other people's poems
like an actor who rehearses
passionately moods not his, and thence
a certain melancholy was his contribution,
like an actor's accent in playing Napoleon.
But Oh the fluency, the pages covered!
In a decade of no verse he has discovered
what erects his sail, what launches his passion,
what shutters his feelings, garages his tongue:
indifferent to the marriages men build on,
he's stirred by the brutal, the beautiful, the
young.

Fetich

A fetich is a focus in space, a fiery
nodule of passion, or furry,
a shiny, a monstrous, a tiny
symbol igniting not only lechery
but meaning, giving if briefly
impellation of rapture and agony:
in a soldier's belt, calligraphy;
in a worn garment blazes theogony.

Quatrain

The city mutters in a modern tone
but the shoe-repairer in my lane
older than the taxi's horn
screams in the language of Haroun.

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NOTES & TOPICS

Ignazio Silone

INTO THE COOL DUSK of the apartment drawing-room—the wooden shutters are already closed against the baking sun-glare of morning in the Rome suburb—comes Ignazio Silone, and for an eerie moment one imagines it is George Orwell who has entered. The body, in the lightweight pale suit and open-necked white shirt, is knottily thick-set and quite unlike Orwell's tubercular gauntness. Yet it is a brother's face: elongated and high-domed; dark, greying hair finger-combed straight back; even the thin bristle of moustache. Yet more marked is the resemblance of the battered, lined melancholy, a haggard reflective sombreness that is occasionally dispelled by a sudden radiant smile—perhaps this is the face of the 'thirties?

Together with Orwell, and Koestler and Malraux, Silone remains in a specific group of pre-war writer-revolutionaries, distinct from the larger body of politically committed intellectuals such as Spender, Steinbeck and Dos Passos. The participation of the first group was physical as well as ideological: it propelled them into the experience of using guns, sitting out imprisonment and exile, and—evidently the most exacting ordeal of all—enduring, for as long as they could hold disenchantment at bay, the dogma of the Communist International. To-day in his own country Silone is at sixty-one respected but neglected: the razzmatazz of modern boom-time Italy has washed past him in a wave of Aid-bolstered surface prosperity, and he seems to be left on an historical sandbank, a lonely brooding monolith to the Resistance fighters who died under Mussolini's Fascism. Even in the West, where *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine* are still honoured—and read—for the truth and beauty of their statement of the plight of men living under tyranny, his latest novel, *The Fox and the Camellias*,* has been received with wan approval. While praising it for its "humanity," "wisdom," and "sincerity," there was a tepid lack of interest in some reviews, in which, significantly, were to be found such phrases as "rather old-fashioned," "a little tired," and "Silone... whom one must now think of as representing the older generation of Italian writers." In one British left-wing journal the pitifully shallow summation of the reviewer was: "I suspect that the message, whatever it is, is not very important. The book gives an impression of great weariness and boredom, the sadness of a writer deprived of his cause." Apart from that case of exceptional myopia, it can hardly have been thought that the moral attitude implicit in *The Fox and the Camellias* —the insistence that human dignity is more precious than the self-pride of systems, the recurrent reminders that authoritarianism hates even a flower's freedom to grow—is irrelevant or invalid today. Presumably the lassitude that misted those reviews was provoked by the story's setting in time and the political roles of the characters: the 'thirties, the Fascist agent, the Communist peasants. No one actually wrote, "What, not again," but an inference emerged that some critics had read the book in a mood of resignation to Silone's embalmment in the period when idealism was tenable and the banners of our age were in pristine black and white.

INDEED, IT IS QUICKLY CLEAR from a conversation with him that Silone's viewpoint is still from that time—but from the bleakness of the moment when he broke with the Communist Party.

"It was a great crisis in my life," he says, "and one that, I suppose, has left scars. Although I tried to be an efficient Communist I was never a very good one, because I thought that Communism was something that it is not. It took me longer to find that out than it should have done, but all during that period one was so busy in the day-to-day activities and dangers of fighting for freedom that one had no time to scrutinise the true nature of Communism. When the confrontation with reality could no longer be delayed, it was even then, although I had no choice, very hard to leave the Party, to leave so many of my comrades, some of them dead, some of them in prison. Yet in a way, when the time came, I think the inner severance had already been made.

"Now I consider myself to be a Socialist without a party and a Christian without a church. I still feel bound to the ethics and idealism of each but I can no longer have any part of what the State has made of Socialism and the Church has made of Christianity. Here, in Italy, the Church in its actual exercise of authority merely reflects the mass society it is part of. Within the Church there are many states of mind. There are men I despise but also men I admire and respect. There are those who still dream of the Inquisition. But there are also those who are enlightened and progressive. My books are not now forbidden by the Church, and oddly enough I sometimes get

* Cape, 13s. 6d.

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quite sympathetic and favourable reviews in Catholic papers. That may be because, although this is a Catholic country, we have no Catholic novelists as such—none like Graham Greene in Britain or Mauriac in France. So I am one of the very few Italian writers, perhaps the only one, whose characters are preoccupied with moral and religious problems—the revolutionary in my books is the man who has turned to politics out of a religious need. So perhaps some Catholics are grateful for that! . . .

"Another aspect of this is that my novels may not be very popular here because Italians don't want their novelists to be moralists. They're problems the priest talks about. Italians have never had much interest in politics—only to make a career or gain benefits, but seldom out of conviction and the desire to bring about social improvements. Fascism exaggerated and made worse some of the bad qualities already existing in the Italian character, partly because of the Fascist party's deliberate policy, partly because it accidentally coincided with the early use of mass media. One of the defects it accentuated is the beggar mentality, the belief that you join an organisation to get something out of it. When the mass party came into being, the idea was purposely fostered that you joined and were in benefit or you were an outsider and were denied the advantages.

"Now Fascism has gone, but the mass party has remained. The Communists get their orders from Moscow, the Christian Democrats get theirs from the Vatican. And people join either still with the object of gaining advantages for themselves. It is the same beggar mentality still persisting and it has brought a fearful degeneration of public life. Some people get their children into one party or the other—even into both!—so that they will have access to jobs or social circles. . . .

"Another defect emphasised by Fascism was the Italian characteristic of not having faith but going through the motions of having faith, just in case. The Italian Catholic doesn't really believe but he keeps up the performance of believing—because you never know. And so with Fascism. When it fell, people said that they had never believed in it anyway, which was probably true. Probably Mussolini himself never believed in it. It is the same now with most in the Communist and Christian Democratic parties: they don't believe but go on practising the ritual without faith. If Communism fails in Italy its supporters will undoubtedly say they never did believe in it. That will again be quite true, but there is a frightful moral hollowness here. . . .

"I do not consider myself to be an anti-Fascist writer. Fascism was painful, but it was banal and superficial, and a passing phase. My criticism of Italian society goes deeper than Fascism. The reality I try to depict is something which existed long before Fascism and which has outlasted it. I no longer see life in terms of black and white—perhaps as black and grey, for white, I now see, doesn't exist.

"I KNOW THAT THE QUESTION has been asked if I have changed my mind about Fascism because the main sacrificial act in *The Fox and the Camellias* is performed by the Fascist, and some reviewers wondered if I was suggesting that, after all, Fascism may not be all bad. That is a misreading of my intentions. Judgment of Fascism is different from judgment of a Fascist. I haven't modified my opinion about Fascism as a system, but when I look at a Fascist I must, of course, see him as a human being and see him with pity and compassion. It is not a matter of changing one's mind, simply that now Italian Fascism can be seen in perspective as a detail in the whole panorama of totalitarian systems running mass society. After all, Fascism can emerge in many different forms, can call itself Democracy and still exercise mass domination of the proletariat.

"This is why the writer's function is increasingly important to-day. He belongs to society, not to the state. The individual writer must decide for himself whether he 'commits' himself or not—by that I mean whether or not he takes part in political action. But his duty remains: to defend the individual's rights against invasion or erosion by the state. He must reveal the truth that, as the state's machinery gets stronger and more efficient, it becomes more skilful in persuading the individual that he is living under freedom and democracy. Only the writer can expose this fraud.

"My own situation was that during all the time that I was in exile the writers who stayed in Italy and continued working under Fascism had to adopt an opaque style, similar to that of the French symbolists, to avoid any 'dangerous' attitudes being pinned on them. So when I returned I was right out of the main current of writing, alien to critics and other writers. Readers had become used to a diet of sex and love-life problems, and the problems I am concerned with, political, spiritual, and moral problems, are of no great interest to the average Italian reader. . . .

"The reason that in more than thirty years as an author I have published so few books is, first, that I write very slowly and with great difficulty, but, more important, that if it depended upon me alone I would forever rewrite one book all my life, just as some painters in the Middle Ages kept painting new versions

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of the same picture. It is a pity that material considerations force writers to produce a new book every year, pretending that it is a new one, when it is almost always the same one dressed up differently. Fundamentally most writers have got only one book in them but for economic reasons they have to assume a prolificness they don't have.

"I have now re-written *Fontamara* and *Bread and Wine*, and am now working on *The Seed Beneath the Snow* which is turning out to be twice as long as the original. Actually it repels me to re-read one of my own books because I find so many faults in it. Yet that is the reason I feel compelled to keep correcting and trying to improve it.

"I believe an author's first book is an expression of his attitude to life. After that, each year he lives should give greater depth, subtler refractions, to his understanding of life. Isn't it right that he should try to pass on to his book that same growth?"

Kenneth Allsop

Down Among the Rightists

Report from America — By BRIAN CROZIER

In the most critical periods of our nation's history, there have always been those on the fringes of our society who have sought to escape their own responsibility by finding a simple solution, an appealing slogan or a convenient scapegoat.—PRESIDENT KENNEDY, SPEECH AT HOLLYWOOD, NOVEMBER 19, 1961.

We must face the fact that the United States is neither omnipotent nor omniscient... and that therefore there cannot be an American solution for every world problem.—PRESIDENT KENNEDY, SPEECH AT SEATTLE, NOVEMBER 16, 1961.

JOHN BIRCH is the Horst Wessel of an American neo-Nazism. The real man must have been an intolerant busybody. The myth makes him righteous and incorruptible. A fundamentalist Baptist missionary, John Birch served in China during the second world war as an intelligence officer under General Claire Chennault. He was killed near Suchow by Chinese Communists ten days after the war ended. There does not appear to have been anything particularly heroic about his death. Captain Birch, as he was, had strayed behind the Communist lines on a routine mission. Asked for an explanation, he had blustered, and in the heat of the argument he was shot dead. Apart from getting himself killed after the war was over, the young man's only claim to distinction consisted of having led a secret group of thirteen fundamentalist students in a protest against the alleged heresies taught by the faculty of Mercer University in Macon, Georgia. This was in 1939. The professors were cleared and police had to escort Birch and his friends from the campus for their own protection.[1]

Out of this slender and unpromising material, Mr. Robert Welch, the prophet of the John Birch Society, has built a myth and a movement. In his book *The Life of John Birch*, the humourless young captain assumes heroic stature and becomes the first post-war American martyr to world Communism. Welch, himself a fundamentalist Baptist, born in North Carolina some sixty-one years ago, Harvard-educated, living at Belmont, near Boston, manufactured candy most of his life. Political illumination came to him in the 1950s, and on December 8, 1958, he gathered a dozen like-minded friends around him in Indianapolis, one of the citadels of American conservatism, and founded the John Birch Society.

It is easy to dismiss the John Birch Society as "just another" crackpot organisation of the extreme Right, and it is certainly only one of many in the field. It would be equally easy to sound alarmist and conclude that because the John Birch Society exists and flourishes, America is "going Fascist." I shall steer clear of both false trails.

I spent part of the winter lecturing in the United States and my commitments took me to some twenty States of the union. Wherever I went I asked questions about the Birch Society and other groups of the extreme Right, and about American conservatism, of which these groups are an excrescence. Surprisingly

[1] *Inside the John Birch Society*. By Gene Grove. Fawcett World Library, New York.

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often, the subject of Birch was raised by others before I had had time to mention it. True, I was moving through some of America's most conservative states. Had my route led further north, I might have met with blank stares. Still, I was left in no doubt about the impact of John Birch's posthumous memorial. The shadowy Mr. Welch and his followers have become table talk through thousands of miles of United States territory.

Shadowy Mr. Welch surely is. I made contact with his office outside Boston and asked for an appointment, but "your Founder," as he likes to style himself in his monthly bulletins, sent word that he was too busy to see me. This may have been literally true, for the Birch Society now provides steady employment for twenty-eight stenographers. On the other hand, Mr. Welch's reticence may have been connected with the bruising time he has had on the rare occasions when he has exposed himself to reporters or television cameras. Those who have met or heard him describe him as a fumbling and ineffectual speaker. Unlike the late Senator McCarthy, whose passing the Birch Society often laments, the "Founder" is not a demagogue. Should the Society ever find its McCarthy, it could become really dangerous.

The danger, however, already exists, in latent form. It is inherent in the growing membership of the Birch Society and the proliferation of other groups or movements, such as "Pro-America" and the "Christian Anti-Communist Campaign"; in the growth of militarist and absolutist "thinking"; and in the expanding power of what President Eisenhower, in his farewell address last January, called "the military-industrial complex"—that is, the marriage of the Pentagon and the big arms companies, such as Boeing and Lockheed.

THE CORE of the problem is a state of mind, if the term can be stretched to include the mindless followers of Robert Welch. For Birchism is a form of unthought and unreason. Every month, members receive a bulletin telling them what to "think." The "Founder's" word is final and no argument is invited or tolerated. The Society issues lists of books approved for reading and instructs its members what postcards, letters, or telegrams they are to send, or telephone calls to make, to Congressmen and Senators, newspapers or private individuals selected for persecution. The perfect Birchite is probably rare, for the undiluted doctrine of the Society is considered too strong for ordinary members. It is contained in a book-length letter by Robert Welch, entitled *The Politician*, and sent privately to a few hundred friends. *The Politician* requires Birchites to believe that "Dwight Eisenhower is a dedicated, conscious agent of the Communist conspiracy," to agree with Welch that "the chances are very strong that Milton Eisenhower is actually Dwight Eisenhower's superior and boss within the Communist party," and to swallow the proposition that other American Communists in high places included the late John Foster Dulles, his brother Allen Dulles, former head of the Central Intelligence Agency, Chief Justice Warren, and Presidents Roosevelt and Truman. Such accusations —especially the one against President Eisenhower—have proved damaging to the Society in its drive for membership, and *The Politician* has been repudiated as an official document of the Society. This repudiation, however, cannot be taken seriously, for it represents Robert Welch's uncensored work and he has not disclaimed its authorship. In the words of Professor Alan Westin (of Columbia University):

> *The Politician* is to the Society what Leninist dogma is to the Communist front groups in Western or nationalist nations—it is the ultimate Truth held by the Founder and his inner corps but it is too advanced and too powerful to present, as yet, to the "masses" being led.

My feeling is that the actual members of the Birch Society and similar organisations—even those who swallow undiluted Birchism—are less worrying than those who stop short of full conversion. There are always cranks, and even in America, where the crop is singularly rich, they can usually be contained by democratic processes, however much damage they do for a time. But it is harder to laugh Birchism off the map than, say, the Empire Loyalists. For one thing, it has powerful friends, such as General Walker, who started Birch-style indoctrination courses for his troops until the Administration and the Pentagon slapped him down. For another, it is useful to generals in search of victory in the strategic desert of the nuclear stalemate, to companies in search of arms contracts, to workers and economists afraid of the economic consequences of disarmament, and to frustrated ordinary Americans who cannot see why the Berlin problem or any other manifestation of "Communism" cannot be solved the way America has always solved its problems, such as the piping of natural gas from Texas to the eastern States. It seems natural to assume that since international problems don't seem to get solved, on America's terms, then "traitors" within must be responsible.

THE CONSPIRATORIAL VIEW of history certainly thrives on frustrations like Cuba, Laos, or Berlin. Hence the existence, not only of a lunatic fringe, but also of a fringe of the fringe: the almost converted. It may be useful to quote

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the words of near-Birchites with whom I talked, and to give some examples I collected of the work of the "radical right."

> This Administration is just about the worst we could have. Friends of mine have become members of the John Birch Society because they want to give their children a better life. General Walker was shamefully treated. He is a fine man and a fine officer, and his only crime is that he was anti-Communist. . . . Foreign aid is just a waste. Foreigners don't love you for it. John Birch is doing a public service by showing up people and drawing our attention to the problem.—*A Boston businessman* (who could well have been a member of the Birch Society without admitting it).
>
> I don't believe in the John Birch Society because it doesn't respect the facts. Eisenhower and Dulles aren't Communists. If evidence is adduced to prove they are, or were, then I shall be distressed, speaking personally, but I shall accept it. . . . There could be a need, though, for an organisation such as the Birch Society, to wake people up, because it takes a lot to rouse people and people simply won't be roused except by an appeal to their emotions. . . . But I believe in getting the facts right.—*An industrialist in Charleston, West Virginia.*
>
> The John Birch Society is holding a big meeting in the Coliseum here to-night and it will draw a big crowd. Pity you can't stop over and look in. . . . It's a patriotic organisation although of course it's being smeared. It's doing a job that has to be done and doing it well and quietly without seeking publicity. By the way, it has denied it ever accused Eisenhower and Dulles of being Communists.—*A radio reporter in Indianapolis.* (The same man asked me: "Are the Russians going to launch a big war soon?")

Then there was the brisk and self-confident committee woman in Jacksonville, Texas, who said to me: "Our ambassador in Mexico kept on telling the State Department Castro was a Communist, but nobody would listen. So there must be Communists in high places within the State Department."

WHEN IT COMES to action, the radical Right works in a variety of ways, some public and sensational, others clandestine, still others in a penumbra of semi-privacy. Unlike McCarthy, Welch is not a member of the United States Congress; he has no public instrument, no constitutional or semi-constitutional apparatus such as the House Un-American Affairs Committee (his aims, in any event, are ultimately revolutionary). But if he lacks a public apparatus, he makes up for it by the possession of funds (his own and the $24 a year the Society receives from each of its male members; women paying only $12—an interesting sex distinction in a country in which the women are the majority stockholders); by a cellular growth of "chapters" in many states; and by concentrated attacks on certain issues and at selected spots. Sometimes the issues are national and important. For instance, in the Society's bulletin for May, 1960, on the eve of the "Summit" meeting in Paris, members were urged to "send *at once* a postcard, letter, or telegram to the White House, reading simply as follows:

> *Dear President Eisenhower—*
> If you go, don't come back!
> Sincerely,
> (*Signature*)

Again, the John Birch Society, together with "We the People," another radical Right organisation, sent 140,000 letters or telegrams to the special sub-committee of the Senate that was investigating the General Walker case.[2] The bulk of the Society's activities is probably at the parochial level, however, and its techniques appear to be closely modelled on those used by Communist parties all over the world. One example that came my way illustrates the resemblance. In Pecos, a town of 12,000 in Texas, an agent of the Birch Society moved in with ample funds, and bought the local biweekly newspaper, the *Pecos Enterprise*, which traditionally supported the Democratic party. He re-named it *The Independent*, re-numbered the issues, starting from No. 1, and ran editorials supporting the radical Right wing of the Republican party. This, however, was a case of the biter bitten. The local millionaire (there really does seem to be a local millionaire, at least one, in every small town in Texas, one discovers with pleasure) decided to fight the intruder. He founded a rival paper, the *Pecos Daily News*, ran it inexpensively and indeed profitably by the photo-offset process, and gave back to the citizens of Pecos their familiar Democratic diet. Since then, *The Independent* has been re-named *The Independent and Enterprise*. It has returned to the numbering of the old *Pecos Enterprise* and toned down its Right-wing radicalism.

IF THIS WERE a Ph.D. thesis, I should feel compelled to give at least passing attention to the activities of about a thousand American Right-wing organisations and to quote from a representative selection of the proliferating publications that express their views. I shall restrict myself to some of the odder examples

[2] A fascinating symposium is contained in *The New Drive against the Anti-Communist Program*, which records the hearing of the Senate "sub-committee to investigate the administration of the Internal Security Act and other security laws" (U.S. Government Printing Office, 1961).

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that came my way during my tour. I have chosen these, rather than others, because they illustrate some of the principal strands that make up the tangled skein of Right-wing mental processes in the United States to-day: fundamentalist religion and the tendency to analyse politics in moral terms; patriotism, of the "more-patriotic-than-thou" variety; and the frustrated need for *action*, in the face of problems that obstinately refuse to be solved in an "American" way.

> SHILOH, ILL. (A.P.). Seventeen men, a woman, and a boy, who call themselves Minutemen, heard a lecture on guerrilla warfare Saturday, but called off scheduled manœuvres when police seized some of their weapons. The Minutemen call themselves an anti-Communist group and claim a dozen bands and squads in different parts of the country. It is a loosely-knit organisation with no central chain of command because of the danger of infiltration by Communists. (Members include) a good number of doctors and professional men. The police seized two Browning automatic rifles, a Browning machine-gun, and an M4 rifle.—*Dallas Morning News*.

> SPECIAL COMBINATION OFFER. The Holy Bible, King James Version, self-pronouncing text, white Fabrikoid cover imprinted in gold leaf, and a 6-month gift subscription to LIFE LINES to whomever you designate, $10.00.—From *Life Lines*, Vol. 3, No. 76. This pamphlet, privately distributed, devotes half its space to right-wing views and half to religious revivalism. It is run in conjunction with a radio programme relayed by more than thirty stations in different states. The man behind it is said to be Mr. H. L. Hunt, of Dallas, one of the biggest of the big oil magnates of Texas.

> A proposed National Indignation Convention resolution blasting pilot and equipment aid for Yugoslavia . . . asked that "military personnel of any Communist country be removed from our land," that the U.S. "immediately cancel any contract for military equipment sale (current or obsolete) to any Communist country." Also the resolution demands, "it should be determined who in the Department of State is responsible . . . and they should be removed from office along with any and all persons associated with them." —*Dallas Morning News*.

> Radio-TV commentator Dan Smoot assailed the mobilisation of Texas' 49th Armoured Division as fitting in with the Communist plan for the United States, in a speech before more than 2,500 persons here Monday night. . . . Smoot said the Communist plan for the U.S. is to de-emphasise our nuclear deterrent capability and concentrate on limited ground wars.—Again from the *Dallas Morning News*, which is singularly rich in news of radical Right activities. Dan Smoot, who issues the *Dan Smoot Report* in Dallas, is one of the most influential voices of American conservatism of the far Right.

> In Las Vegas the head of the local civil defence agency recently called for a militia of 5,000 men to protect residents in the event of a thermo-nuclear war. The men would be trained to crush an expected invasion—not from foreign shores but from Southern California. It is believed that Los Angeles, as a major city, would be under direct attack. Survivors, warned J. Carlton Adair, the Las Vegas civilian defence official, "would come into Nevada like a swarm of locusts." Obviously they would have to be repulsed.—From an illuminating, and blood-chilling, article by Norman Cousins on "Shelters, Survival, and Commonsense," in the *Saturday Review* of October 28, 1961.

With the last of these quotations, we have reached a lunatic no-man's-world, in which, by a process of relentless logic, the new fundamentalists have had their way, Right has tried to triumph over Wrong by using nuclear arms, Wrong has hit back in kind and it has become Right for surviving citizens to mow down those impertinent enough not to die in neighbouring communities. This is the world of "mega-deaths," the euphemistic consequence of nuclear megatons dropped in anger. It is indeed in this world that the Minutemen and the Birchites, the Christian Anti-Communist Crusaders and the National Indignation Conventioners naturally cohabit with such generals and arms manufacturers who think as they do. The disadvantage of such cohabitation is that it implies extinction, as President Kennedy was aware when he said, in his recent speech:

> Let us concentrate more on keeping enemy bombers and missiles away from our shores, and concentrate less on keeping neighbours away from our shelters.

It is not, I think, by coincidence that those Americans who attack "liberalism" with most venom are also those who call most insistently for a pre-emptive war. Time and again, I heard two parallel sets of arguments issuing from the same mouth. One argument dealt with liberalism and the welfare state and ran roughly as follows:

> Federal spending is bad because it is an interference in state rights (*e.g.*, education) and therefore unconstitutional. Besides, liberal spending on welfare schemes is a form of socialism, and socialism is really Communism. (Spending on defence rates as a patriotic activity and is specifically excluded from the argument.)

The other argument concerns war as an instrument of policy. It runs like this:

> This country is too big to be pushed around. You can't negotiate with Communists because you can't compromise between right and wrong. There's going to be a war anyway, so we might as well get in first.

THERE's really no need to pile on further agony. It is time we looked behind these arguments, to the causes, hidden or apparent,

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of the groups or movements that use them. This is unfamiliar jungle to me, and I tread warily, allowing myself the comfort of treading, at least in the early stages, along paths hacked clear of undergrowth by earlier explorers. One of these is Professor Alan F. Westin, who argues that political fundamentalism is endemic in American society, but goes largely unnoticed in normal times, when the alternation of conservative and liberal rule irons out tensions. At such times, the apolitical sector of American society goes about its business, carrying the germ of fundamentalism in a dormant state. At times of stress, however, the fundamentalist germ erupts to the surface and multiplies in a fever of exertion.

Two other explorers, Ralph E. Ellsworth and Sarah M. Harris, lament the custom, prevalent, they say, among historians and journalists, to speak of the radical Right as a lunatic fringe, "small in number and absurd in pretensions."[3] Name-calling, they argue, far from damaging the radical Right, has brought new converts to it. They see in this a sign of that need for status-seeking martyrdom that marks the incipient fundamentalist.

Richard Hofstadter, one of the most penetrating students of the lunatic fringe, traces the origins of Right-wing extremism back to three sources with roots deep in American history: traditional anti-European isolationism; a moral attachment to individualism, reflected in economic ultra-liberalism; and ethnic prejudice, of which the Catholics, immigrants of various kinds, the Jew and the Negro, have all in their turn been victims.[4] Gordon D. Hall, who has conducted a courageous one-man war against extremism for the past fifteen years, told me in Boston, in his quiet, determined way, that he distinguishes four categories of radical movements. The largest consists of those "saving us from something," usually liberalism, socialism, or communism (*e.g.*, the Birch Society); then there are those "saving us *for* something," usually Christianity (*e.g.*, Gerald L. K. Smith's Christian Nationalist Crusade, which raised more than $200,000 in donations alone in 1960). A third category, as Hall sees it, consists of regional organisations which profess to stand up for State rights against encroaching federalism, but in practice stirs up anti-Negro sentiments (*e.g.*, the White Citizens' Council). Finally, there are the extremist political parties aiming, in the final analysis, at seizing power, however remote the prospect may look at any given time; as examples, Mr. Hall gives George Lincoln Rockwell's American Nazi Party and the Communist Party.[5]

The American authorities I have been citing are, as one might suppose, liberals (in the American sense of the term, to which I shall return). It seems to me that an underlying weakness of their analysis of the radical Right lies in an unwillingness to concede any value to the conservative case. Writing as a visitor to the United States (but equally, as a citizen of the United Kingdom) I believe there *is* a conservative case (although I don't vote Conservative). The fact that there is one has indeed, I believe, been a factor in the growth of politics of the further Right. I cannot hope, however, to prove these propositions, or even to make myself understood, if I neglect the tiresome need for definitions, or rather for re-definitions. Liberalism in Britain once connoted *laissez-faire* economics of the Adam Smith school; with a small *l* it still connotes intellectual tolerance. But in Britain, at least, the lines have been blurred by the fact that there is a Liberal Party and that it clearly does not have a monopoly of intellectual tolerance: there are liberals in the Conservative and Labour parties, as well as among Mr. Grimond's followers.

In the United States (one must insist on it), the terms "conservative" and "liberal" are used in a very special way. Moreover, a liberal's definition of a conservative will not be the same as a conservative's definition of his own beliefs; and vice-versa. Professor Westin gives a liberal's definitions in these terms:

> The *Liberals* advocate positive government to regulate enterprise, provide social welfare, and ensure civil rights (racial and religious rights); they advocate minimal government in the areas of cultural and political expression. The *Conservatives* reverse the formula. They urge positive government to control cultural and political expression but the least possible government in the fields of enterprise, welfare, and civil rights.

The American conservatives I met during my tour would not have agreed with every word of either definition, and would probably have added words of their own, not, in all instances, printable. Most of these conservatives defined American liberalism as "the liberal spending of public funds" and the determination to force federal authority down the throats of unwilling States in defiance of the Constitution. (In

[3] *The American Right Wing*, by Ralph E. Ellsworth and Sarah M. Harris (University of Illinois Library School, Occasional Papers, Number 59, November 1960).

[4] It is only fair to point out that although I called the John Birch Society "an American neo-Nazism," because I found the parallel between John Birch and Horst Wessel compelling, the Society does not advocate racial discrimination.

[5] For an account of American Right-wing movements in the McCarthy period, see Daniel Bell (editor), *The New American Right* (New York, Criterion, 1955).

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Shreveport, Louisiana, a local conservative, standing with me under a row of Confederate flags, wistfully observed that he wished the parties could be re-named "liberal" and "conservative," so that he could vote for Senator Barry Goldwater in the next presidential election; this, as a Southerner, he felt he could not do while the main parties kept their present names and their ancestral loyalties.) Such is the semantic confusion that one of the authorities I have quoted three or four paragraphs back finds it necessary to use the term "economic ultra-liberalism" to describe one aspect of Right-wing extremist doctrine.

THIS SEMANTIC CONFUSION may help to account for the fact that in the minds of many Amerimans, both conservatives and liberals, Birchism cohabits and merges with the philosophy of Senator Goldwater. Conservatives tend to see in Mr. Goldwater the all-American champion of conservatism who will lead his followers, Birchites and all, to victory over Communism and other forces of evil. Liberals tend to see in him the potential demagogue of the extreme Right, who will lead America into Fascism on behalf of the Birchites and the whole sinister company of political fundamentalists. These are converse aspects of the same proposition, and I am not aware that Mr. Goldwater has done anything to support it. It seems to me to be as important to distinguish between American conservatism—even of the Goldwater variety—and the Right-wing fundamentalists, as between communism, socialism, and liberalism—even American liberalism, which, as defined above by Professor Westin, would qualify American liberals for membership of the British Labour Party, in the spiritual company of Mr. Woodrow Wyatt, Mr. Douglas Jay, and perhaps Mr. Gaitskell.

It would be unfair to pass judgment on Mr. Goldwater without having read his recent book, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, and I have done so, from cover to cover. It is indeed short, lucid, and well-written. Mr. Goldwater equates conservatism with physical, spiritual, and economic freedom. He does not advocate controls over cultural or political activities; indeed, he does not discuss free speech. He is no anarchist and recognises the need for order; but he argues that the power of the State has encroached too far on individual freedom and that it ought to be pushed back. Specifically, he advocates the abolition of subsidies to farmers, legislation to break closed shop trade unionism, strict enforcement of the Tenth Amendment (which recognises State rights in certain subjects), drastic reduction of federal expenditure (not in defence, but in welfare schemes of all kinds), and the abolition of graduated income tax in favour of fixed percentage taxation.[6] Mr. Goldwater is not against welfare schemes as such, but he would leave them to private charity.

It is, I submit, possible to subscribe to Mr. Goldwater's basic propositions, and even to some of his specific prescriptions, without being a Fascist beast. I happen to be against closed shop trade unionism and to favour reductions in official spending; I have at least gnawing doubts about the undiluted welfare state; and what I saw and heard about integration problems in the deep South makes me agree with Mr. Goldwater when he writes:

> I believe that it *is* both wise and just for Negro children to attend the same schools as whites, and that to deny them this opportunity carries with it strong implications of inferiority. I am not prepared, however, to impose that judgment of mine on the people of Mississippi or South Carolina, or to tell them what methods should be adopted and what pace should be kept in striving towards that goal. That is their business, not mine.

It so happens, on the other hand, that I also think Mr. Goldwater is guilty of dangerous oversimplifications in the field of foreign affairs and that his recipe for *victory* over Communism (as distinct from *peace* in our time) would gravely increase the risks of nuclear annihilation for all of us. But I cannot honestly convict him of hysteria or fundamentalism or incipient Fascism. I am fascinated to know that he is an Episcopalian of part-Jewish parentage; and impressed by the fact that he has publicly denounced Mr. Robert Welch of the John Birch Society.

SIMILARLY, I think we must be very careful where we draw our dividing lines when we come to some other men who are already prominent, or becoming prominent, in American conservative politics. One of these is Mr. M. Stanton Evans, a young man of precocious success and intellectual accomplishment who graduated from Yale in 1955, *magna cum laude*, became managing editor of *Human Events*, and is now, at 27, editor of the *Indianapolis News*. Mr. Evans has discovered (and also zealously fosters) conservatism in the American universities, and lately published a book, *Revolt on the Campus*, to show that American students are going conservative.

[6] Mr. Goldwater thus stops short of the more drastic proposal of one of the major figures of the fundamentalist Right, Frank Chodorov, editor of *Human Events*, who, in his book *The Income Tax: Root of All Evil* (1954), advocates the repeal of the Sixteenth Amendment, which, *inter alia*, legalised federal income tax.

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I dropped in to see Mr. Evans when I was in Indianapolis. He has an endearing Southern rumble of a voice (Indiana is his State of adoption) and a warm smile, instantly snuffed out by a pouting conservative scowl. His vocabulary is of terrifying vastness, but I record that he used it to dissociate himself from Birchism, in these words:

> The rhetoric of doom and conspiracy is repellent. The John Birch Society has a simplistic view. It appeals to our farmers. It seems natural to them that the men who sponsor Bills X, Y, and Z, which further Communism, must themselves be Communists. . . . We don't need a secret or semi-secret society like John Birch. We have enough open conservative groups.

Between writing leaders for his paper and addressing conservative students, Mr. Stanton Evans contributes articles to the *National Review*, whose editor, Mr. Wm. F. Buckley, Jr., is now regarded as perhaps the main intellectual pillar of Right-wing conservatism. Those who have met Mr. Buckley or who have heard him speak, have usually been impressed by him. I have not met him, but if I ever do, I shall ask him just what his organisation, "Young Americans for Freedom," meant when it sponsored M. Jacques Soustelle's trip to the United States two years ago. Until I have heard his reply, I prefer not to put him in this category or that among the Rightists.

I AM INCLINED to agree with Westin and other authorities who consider political extremism to be endemic in American society. England's responsibility is clearly great for having exported so many of its Puritans across the Atlantic. Absolutist doctrines of right and wrong merge naturally into extremist political concepts. The Puritan influence is still powerful in America and must be accounted a permanent factor in the breeding of fundamentalist groups; it is no accident that Robert Welch, like John Birch, is a fundamentalist Baptist.

Given the breeding-ground, it is hardly surprising that the tensions of the late 'fifties, together with the visible shortcomings of United States foreign policy, should have combined to foster the growth of a new crop of extremist groups. The simultaneous growth of the monster state, as measured by rocketing federal budgets, created a spontaneous revulsion in many people's minds, in the form of an upsurge of conservative feeling. Internationally, in the context of the Western world, this phenomenon coincided with the continuing ascendancy of conservative politics (and a corresponding decline in the fortunes of social democracy) in Britain, France, West Germany, Italy, and Japan (which rates as a "Western" country in certain respects). It was, I think, partly this national and international climate that denied Senator John F. Kennedy the full benefit of the swing of the political pendulum in the 1960 Presidential election campaign, and which, to a large extent, accounted for the narrowness of his victory.

The fact of the conservative upswing in the United States should not, as I have said, mislead us into lumping conservatives and the lunatic Right together. The John Birch Society is a potential danger (of which President Kennedy has taken cognisance). But Goldwater conservatism is a far more important thing. Politically, Senator Goldwater is a bandwagon, on which the Birchites, along with many others, are trying to jump. Mr. Nixon's defeat by Mr. Kennedy and his dalliance with Californian politics have damaged his pulling power; Mr. Rockefeller's recently announced divorce has probably dented his image of enlightened republicanism. In contrast, Mr. Goldwater was riding high towards the end of last year. A poll of Republican delegates to the 1960 Convention (admittedly conducted by *Human Events*) showed that the Senator from Arizona was well in the lead among possible Republican candidates for the Presidency. Among those who expressed views, 52·6 per cent favoured Goldwater, 30 per cent Nixon, and only 17·4 per cent Rockefeller. Senator Goldwater must be taken seriously as a possible future President of the United States.

This fact has, of course, a bearing on the future fortunes of the radical Right. Should Senator Goldwater's popularity and influence continue to grow, he may seem to the Republican Party to represent its best chances of returning to power in 1964. And he, for his part, will almost certainly, in that event, remain within the Republican fold. Should this happen, he would have it in his power to destroy the Birch Society and would probably do so. If his ambitions were frustrated, however, it is not impossible that he might seek to unify the wilder Right-wing movement under his banner. But this is a speculative contingency which the Senator has so far done nothing to justify.

IN THE MEANTIME (that is, until the next Presidential elections), Birchism and other extremist movements may be expected to grow still further, if only because the nature of to-day's international crises—Berlin, Laos, Vietnam, Formosa—will provide continuing ammunition for the prophets of doom and the denouncers of "treason." Domestically, too, the climate continues to favour the Right in the broadest sense. The House Committee on Un-American

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Activities, for instance, still looks unassailable. On March 1, 1961, only six Congressmen, all Democrats, could be found to vote against the committee's annual appropriation, against the 412 who approved it. Asked by journalists whether the voting figures accurately reflected the state of feeling in the House, Representative William Fitts Ryan, one of the six dissenters, said he thought probably 80 or 90 other Congressmen privately opposed the committee but were restrained from voting against the appropriation by various fears and pressures. This informed opinion is a measure of the state of feeling in many American constituencies (and perhaps also of the power of Birch-like pressure techniques).

THE EXISTENCE of a strong sector of public opinion favouring "victory" tactics in the cold war, opposing (and, when necessary, sabotaging) disarmament negotiations, advocating the use of nuclear power as an instrument of policy and equating East-West negotiations of any kind either with defeatism and appeasement (Goldwater) or with treason (Welch) is, of course, a political factor of the first magnitude, which President Kennedy cannot ignore. The Cuban fiasco showed that he is not—or at any rate was not, at that time—entirely immune to extremist military pressures; and the logic of American commitments in the deteriorating situation in South Vietnam could easily lead the Kennedy Administration into a collision course. On the other hand, two recent developments encourage the view that Mr. Kennedy is aware of the danger of Rightist militarism and is determined to stop it. One was the ban imposed by the Secretary of Defence, Mr. McNamara, on the expression of politically partisan views by civilian and military officials at meetings sponsored by non-governmental bodies. The other was the attempt by Mr. Kennedy, in his recent speeches, and in his interview in *Izvestia*, to educate public opinion (his own as well as Russia's) in the realities of power-politics in the nuclear age. The issue may be in doubt, but at least the battle has been joined.

London Commentary

Atlantic Dialogues

By ANDREW SHONFIELD

THE British have from the start grossly underestimated the factor of ideology in what has happened in Europe. The danger of making the same mistake arises once again in the current negotiations in Brussels, where it will be easy to lose sight altogether of this factor in the fascination of the practical ingenuities of horse-trading. British negotiators at their best—and the British team in Brussels is of an unusually high calibre—are very good at horse-trading. But British governments are very bad at ideology. There is a strong impulse, even to-day, among people responsible for government in Britain to dismiss the whole ideological business as a peculiar and not very worthy kind of intellectual feebleness from which foreigners are liable to suffer. Certainly, there is no sympathy in London for the underlying European anxiety for explicit spiritual commitment, for statements which may not always, or even usually, be reflected in action, but are normative—like a great deal of Continental European law: so unlike British law which, it is felt, must either be obeyed in full or "brought into disrepute."

One might have expected that the British would have gained some insight into this matter at second-hand through the Americans, who in some ways are closer to the political thinking of Continental Europe. But in fact this has been the worst blind spot: there has been an extraordinary reluctance on the British side to grasp the importance of the ideological factor in the behaviour of the American Government towards Europe. It was breathtaking to hear

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Mr. Macmillan announce in the spring of 1961, in his television press conference following his first meeting with Mr. Kennedy as President of the United States, that he had discovered that the U.S. Administration did not, after all, object to the idea of enlarging the European Common Market by bringing Britain into it.* The Prime Minister then enlarged on his discovery explaining, with terrifying aplomb, the interesting attitude of the U.S. Administration which was, he was able to inform us, prepared to accept certain commercial disadvantages for the sake of the objective of political unity in Europe.

The truth is that it has been the American ideological commitment to Europe which has probably been the single most important factor in building up the authority and prestige of the European Commission in Brussels; above all, it allowed Dr. Walther Hallstein, the President of the Commission, to take the lead in resisting the British attempt over two long years to negotiate a European Free Trade Area—a purely commercial venture with the minimum of political content. It is not certain in retrospect whether American policy was deliberately aimed at fostering the illusion that the European Commission had more power than it really possessed or whether there was a natural propensity, derived from the United States' own historical experience, to believe that the Commission was already endowed with some of the authority of an embryo "United States of Europe." In either case the practical effect was to enhance the power of the Commission. In return, the European activists are to-day very tender about America's interests. No doubt there are still some who hanker after the 1950 version of an independent non-aligned Western Europe which would be a Third Force between the United States and Russia. But these are not the voices which are heard among the people who are actually doing the job of integrating Europe at the practical level of day-to-day affairs. One suspects that the Third Force brigade, who are in fact intense nationalists of a traditional kind hiding temporarily behind a fashionable European façade, are nowadays to be found fellow-travelling with General de Gaulle's limited and strictly old-fashioned scheme for a close gang of European states working together to promote each other's foreign policies.

To-day it is not the British but the European *avant-garde* around M. Jean Monnet, who talk constantly about the need to promote the unity of the Atlantic Alliance and about the danger of "isolating the United States." It is in fact accepted doctrine throughout the European Commission in Brussels, that no one who is not a member of the European Common Market may be given any privilege or advantage which is denied to Europe's main ally and protector, the United States. It has already been made clear to the neutrals, particularly Switzerland and Sweden, that they will not be able to claim any rights whatsoever just because they are Europeans. If the Commission were to meet their wishes and exchange commercial favours with them which would give them the right of duty-free entry for their exports into the European Common Market, how, it is asked, could the same rights be denied to the United States? And if they were extended in this way, that would destroy the nascent political entity which is the Americans' only interest in the whole venture. It will also be difficult to induce the Common Market to grant concessions to Commonwealth agricultural producers which are denied to American farmers.

I had a characteristic and rather touching example of this concern for American interests from an ardent European of my acquaintance holding high office in Brussels earlier this year. We were discussing the dramatic American offer of a 50 per cent cut in their tariffs as part of the bargain for freer trade with the European Common Market. Elated by the demonstration that the international impact of the new European Community was not, as some people particularly in Britain had predicted, to create rival and mutually exclusive trading blocs, but rather to lower the trade barriers all round, he nevertheless went on to express keen concern that the Americans might be overstretching themselves. His was by no means an isolated attitude.

The point was made again and again—it is accepted doctrine at the Brussels headquarters of the Common Market—that the important object by now is not to cut tariffs but to build

* Viewed from Brussels, Mr. Macmillan's view, stated in the TV programme of April 14th, that there had been a dramatic change from the Eisenhower Administration's attitude of "anxiety" that Britain should not enter the Common Market to Kennedy's sudden beneficence seemed to be pure British mirage. Throughout the period, effective policy towards the European Community in Washington has been shaped by two men—Douglas Dillon, Under-Secretary of State under Eisenhower (and now Secretary of the Treasury), and George Ball, who has been in charge of European affairs since Kennedy took office and is now Under-Secretary of State. For all practical purposes the views of these two intelligent men were identical: they are both ardent ideologues of a United Europe, wishing to have that Europe as large as possible and determined that Britain's purely commercial needs should not be allowed to interfere with the process of consolidation.

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up effective international institutions which will serve the interests of Europe and the other members of the Atlantic Alliance. Europe without American military support and economic collaboration is nothing. The question is therefore to find the appropriate institutions to allow the Americans and the Europeans to work more and more closely together. Tariff cutting happened to be the most appropriate instrument to start the build-up of the kind of institutions required by Western Europe. But it does not follow that this is the most promising way of achieving the larger objectives of the Atlantic group of countries.

IN FACT the European ideologues are far more sophisticated on these matters than most people give them credit for being. They were, for example, by no means enthusiastic about the proposal launched by Mr. Herter, the former U.S. Secretary of State, and Mr. Clayton, that the United States should drop its tariffs and join the Common Market. It is not even clear that this initiative, even if it were taken more seriously, would be thought to be a particularly useful exercise. The things that Western Europe and the United States have to do together require political institutions of a different character from those of Western Europe itself, and they also require to be set up more rapidly. At this point I can only state, without trying the impossible feat of proving the fact, that the process of knitting together the lives of neighbouring European nations, of making their laws and their most humdrum daily activities fit in with one another in harmony is regarded as an end in itself. It will no doubt lead to joint political action in the sphere of foreign policy in the end, but if that were all it would be a pretty slow way of getting there.

Indeed there are signs of a certain semantic confusion in the talk about the "essentially political objectives" of the European Common Market, about which the Americans and the Europeans are apparently agreed. There is even a beguiling similarity between the words used in the American Constitution and the preamble to the Treaty of Rome about their respective aims. The U.S. Constitution states the intention of creating a "more perfect union"; the first sentence of the preamble to the Treaty of Rome expresses the determination to establish "an ever closer union among the peoples of Europe" (*...une union sans cesse plus étroite entre les peuples Européens*). But the Americans in the 1780s were in fact concerned with a quite different and a much more determinate problem. Their aim was to *prevent* a group of states from growing into independent policy-making bodies. They therefore set out precisely a number of prohibited areas of independent political activity—tariffs, commercial treaties with foreign powers, war, etc. But they were not seriously concerned with the problem of securing any extra rights for the individual American person in each of the thirteen states of the Union.

This is the crucial point in the European movement of the 1950s and 1960s. The first aim is to establish the privilege of equality of treatment for *people* beyond the borders of their own sovereign state. Nearly all of the activities of the Brussels Commission so far have been directed in one way or another towards loosening the cramp on elementary human rights—notably, the right to live and work outside the country in which one happened to be born—imposed by the overblown national state which developed such intolerable pretensions in the first half of the 20th century.

OF COURSE the distinction between the two political aims—the aim of bringing states together so that they speak in unison when they have dealings with outsiders and the aim of extending the rights of the individual European—is often not consciously made by those who are most directly concerned. My contention is only that whereas the original emphasis in the European Movement after the war was very heavily on the first aim, it has now in practice shifted unmistakably towards the second. It is this which explains the surprising fact that it is possible to find a very advanced, very dedicated European in a responsible position among the leading group in Brussels, who when asked "Are you or are you not aiming at a fully federal system in Europe?" can truthfully answer: "We ought not to pre-judge the issue. All that we can say for certain is that we are creating a 'community'—a new thing built up out of a lot of deliberate small decisions to run our lives in common. This may in the end become an old-style federation. But the first job is to create a fully-fledged community."

TO WATCH the men who are in charge in Brussels at work on the tedious, detailed, aggravating, and time-consuming business of agreeing about how to run some small aspect of the daily life of six nations in common is a curiously moving experience. Success in this venture depends enormously on not losing one's temper. There must be more than that—a positive kind of patience and sympathy, which will allow people to go on talking usefully even in circumstances of fatigue and extreme irritation. The people concerned, especially those with the reputation of being good negotiators, are generally overworked. It is not just that the issues

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are usually prolix; there are also far too many different negotiations going on at the same time. Ever since the beginning there have been a lot of things waiting to be settled in a hurry among the six members of the Community—the Treaty of Rome contains a whole series of target dates for agreements and compromises on major issues—and meanwhile there are all the external problems: the negotiation of Britain's entry, the Commonwealth's position, the tariff bargaining with the United States, the African associated territories of the Common Market, as well as a number of smaller though still sensitive and potentially explosive issues.

The striking fact is that the men concerned are mostly officials, not politicians with the incentive of marking up a success which will be publicly associated with their personal careers. Indeed it is true to say that the new Europe could not have been built up as far as it has gone without the will to agree among the post-war generation of bureaucrats in Western Europe. No one could have predicted at the end of the war, on the basis of past experience, that this will to agree would suddenly appear in quite this powerful form. The achievement of Europe's bureaucrats depends in large part on the general acceptance of a certain style of conversational debate. It is not just tact. Indeed in some ways it is the very opposite—a demand for rigorous intellectual clarity and a habit of trying to confront issues directly, even if they are awkward. But behind all this there is the tacit agreement that it would be foolish and destructive to try and solve everything at once or to demand a perfect solution for any single point at issue. It is all very pragmatic and workaday. However it is pragmatism of a very special kind, which has nothing in common with our own favourite device of muddling through (*i.e.*, relying on instinct and inarticulate good sense rather than on intellectual clarity) or with the rules of considerate behaviour between states which guide the Commonwealth, where in order to avoid the mention of awkward subjects the area of practical discussion is narrowed down to the point where any sense of united purpose is almost entirely lost.

After making contact with the realities of the Common Market in Brussels, there seems to be something almost bizarre about the widespread British conviction—held both by the supporters and the opponents of Europe in this country—that the real purpose of the exercise is to sharpen up competition and allow the forces of the market unrestricted play. Competition is in fact only mentioned once among the eleven objectives set out in Article 3 of the Rome Treaty, and even then the objective is expressed in a very moderate, defensive form—competition must "not be distorted [*faussée*] in the Common Market." A more important objective, which is rarely mentioned here but which has a special relevance to Britain's problems, is the aim of co-ordinating the economic policies of member states in order to guard against the difficulties caused by deficits in their external balance of payments. The truth is that the system is designed to reduce the unpredictable element in the one part of the economy that Britain and other nations have found since the war they just cannot control—their external trade accounts. By making this a matter of common international concern, the Treaty of Rome offers the first real opportunity for some form of serious planning of economic development by countries which unlike either U.S. or Russia are heavily dependent on their foreign trade—and does so on a scale larger than the nation state.

Plainly there are people inside the European Community (as well as in the British Conservative Party) who try to give the maximum weight to those clauses in the Treaty of Rome which can be interpreted in an extreme *laissez-faire* spirit. But no one who has actually observed the way in which the men who are responsible in Brussels set about translating the Treaty into reality can seriously hold the view that they are trying to destroy the post-war welfare state and revert to an old-style competitive jungle in Europe. Perhaps the best example of the way in which they are wedded to welfare conceptions is their approach to agriculture. If they are too little concerned with "cheap food," as the British claim, their answer is that their primary concern must be for the millions of peasants throughout Western Europe whose standard of life is generally lower than that of the industrial workers in the towns. It is only fair therefore that the first aim of an agricultural policy should be to assure the peasant a decent income. And in pursuit of this end the European Community is going to establish a completely managed system of production, distribution and pricing of food, in which market forces will be kept under very strict control. Only in this way, it has been decided, will it be possible to prise the individual European farmer out of the limitations imposed on him by his own national market. It is at the moment proving to be the most difficult task which the Community has undertaken.

This preoccupation with the awkward administrative detail of internal political and economic problems, which is essential to the task of fostering the growth of a common European

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social tissue, is likely to last for many years yet. There are signs that the Americans have not fully grasped just how absorbing a task it is. Their own history leaves them with little experience of the delicate work of knitting together, loop by loop, the laws and customs which emerge out of the diverse national cultures of these old European societies. Seeing the European Commission so bold and active in the kind of work that the U.S. Federal Government itself has found so difficult (in its relations with the Southern States, for example), there has been a tendency on the American side to overestimate the extent to which the European Community had achieved a basic coherence on wider issues which is necessary if it is to speak with a single authoritative voice in international affairs. Moreover, it is not always understood that nowadays the more sophisticated and advanced Europeans (who have for the present achieved a clear intellectual ascendancy in this highly ideological experiment) are not just concerned with the straightforward traditional task of creating a bigger sovereign entity in Europe. They are dedicated to a more ambitious and less dramatic enterprise, which is to develop new institutions that will make collaboration between states more effective than it has been in the past. Some of these institutions will have sovereign powers; others not.

TWO POINTS stand out. First, the type of institution that is now urgently required as an instrument of joint Europe-United States policies in various fields will almost certainly not be sovereign; and secondly, the United States will have to take the initiative in creating it. The Americans will have to disabuse themselves of the idea that there is already in being a European body of states, which given the right piece of machinery will emerge quickly with some of the attributes of a world power. It is a curiously Gaullist illusion. The Americans now find themselves in need of genuinely international instruments of policy for tasks which they have since the war managed to carry out by themselves. The most obvious need is for a new system of sharing the financial burden of the big American garrison in Western Europe. Paying for this garrison is by now the chief cause of the weakness of the American dollar. And that immediately connects with a second pressing problem—the future of the dollar itself as an international currency. The time has clearly come when the new rich states of Western Europe must take over some of the responsibility of running an international currency from the dollar and the pound. The chronic weakness of these two currencies, their balance of payments deficits which contrast with the unending surpluses of continental Europe, the see-saw between London and New York as the speculative pressures shift from one centre to the other—all this constitutes a serious long-term menace to a rational ordering of international trade and payments. The old international currencies are visibly tottering. But unless the Americans (backed, it is to be hoped, by the British) make it clear that they want a radical change, the European central bankers, who are intensely traditionalist and conservative people, will be content to go on tinkering with the status quo.

The same applies to the attitude of the German government towards American requests for help in meeting the foreign exchange cost of American troops stationed in the country. As long as the Americans are ready to deal with the matter by patching up *ad hoc* arrangements by which the United States is allowed to earn an extra few hundred million Deutsche Marks, no one is going to press for a systematic attempt to share the burden of defending Western Europe on a more rational basis. Meanwhile, it adds neither to the strength of the Western alliance nor to the ability of the Americans to negotiate flexibly with the Russians that the United States should be dependent on unpredictable German acts of generosity to curb the dollar drain caused by the American military commitment in Western Europe.

FINALLY, Britain's part in this changing Atlantic relationship is one of extreme delicacy. The ideological bond between the United States and the European Community creates a predisposition to a common suspicion of Britain's motives. Moreover, the pleas for special treatment that Britain is now making to the Common Market on behalf of the neutral countries in EFTA ("the Seven") involve some discrimination against the United States. So do the British requests in Brussels that the European Common Market should grant favours to the Commonwealth producers like Australia and Canada, whose agricultural produce competes directly with the United States. Both are issues on which Britain has an obligation to press for more generous terms than the European Community is spontaneously willing to concede.

No doubt people in this country will be extremely indignant if it is suggested that Britain is somehow engaged in trying to drive a wedge between the European Common Market and the United States. But that is how the European activists and their allies in the United States may well see it.

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Experts on Trial

A Comment on Mr. Sparrow — By COLIN MACINNES

THE COMICAL DECEITS of the defence in the *Lady Chatterley* trial were not due to that bizarre parade of witnesses failing to understand the sexual ambiguities of the story (or possibly grasping them, and keeping mum), but to their being trapped, by ignorance, vanity, or by fatal good intentions, into appearing in a court of law at all.

Laws are passed by politicians whose ideas, however "progressive," are concerned with possible reforms of the social-moral conventions of their day. Books by writers of the quality of D. H. Lawrence are written not to tinker with inherited conventions, but to reformulate, for their age, what they believe true about the nature of human creatures. A great writer's vision of the human situation, in any society in any age, is prophetic and essentially subversive, and can never be justified (or condemned) in terms of laws (however "advanced") which this society has enacted. It is a total betrayal of a writer of Lawrence's gifts and intentions to presume to defend his art on grounds other than those chosen, at great human sacrifice, by himself: that is, in terms of artistic truth. The only possible reply of anyone asked to appear as a "defence witness," and who had some understanding of what art is, and what law, was to refuse to dishonour Lawrence (and their own critical reputations) by even considering the proposal.

The defending witnesses may justify their conduct to themselves by imagining they struck a blow for literary freedom. The effect of the verdict, and of the utterly irrelevant considerations by which "acquittal" was secured, is exactly the contrary. Before the trial, apart from those who loved Lawrence's work, there was a minority of the population who knew of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* and deemed it a "dirty book." Now, thanks to the trial, millions think it is a dirty book, and buy it precisely for that reason. Critical understanding of Lawrence's work, and acceptance of what is wise and life-loving in it, have been disastrously put back by the whole grotesque procedure. Before it happened, though there was much misunderstanding, there was far less confusion and obscurity. It would have been better had the book remained "banned" (that is, accessible in effect to anyone who took the trouble to get hold of an unexpurgated copy) than that Lawrence's vision should have been defended in terms acceptable to an obscenity law and to a semi-literate courtroom.

IF LAWS SEEKING TO govern literary truth are totally to be mistrusted, so are laws designed to determine how human creatures of both sexes should behave in bed. The pitiable irrelevance of our penal code in this domain is not so much due to whether its moral-social assumptions are legitimate, as to the utter impossibility of discovering which men and women in our land, whatever their sexual inclinations, are "guilty" or not of acts which this code forbids. Even the most optimistic authoritarian legislator on the sexual behaviour of his fellow creatures cannot hope to station nightly spies by the millions of bedsides of his fellow countrymen and woman, to detect which of them may be culpable.

The human bodies of both sexes being constructed, by nature's wisdom, as they are, it seems likely, to say the least, that all sexual possibilities and permutations among men and women are practised, always have been, and always will be. Even a superficial knowledge of sexual customs in the past, and of those to-day in the most diverse lands, suggests this is a basic fact of nature which no opinion (still less any law) will alter much.

About these diverse "facts of life," we in this island seem remarkably innocent—though "ignorant" would be a better word, and often this ignorance seems fearfully or arrogantly wilful. ("It cannot be so because I don't know it's so and, in so far as I do, I don't think it should be so.") Lawrence learned many of the more unusual of these "facts" (including the practice which has now excited the interest of the Warden of All Souls), but he was clearly unable to take some of them for granted when describing them: either because he mistrusted

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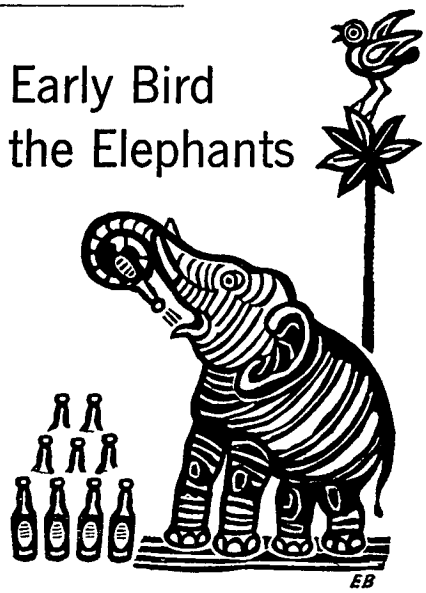
AESOP-TO-DATE

The Early Bird and the Elephants



A singing Bird did so entrance
A pair of simple Elephants
That they implored the songstress tell
What was it made her sing so well.
It must at least be Guinness Stout
That brought such rapturous twitt'rings out.

Alas! the eager pachyderms
Found that her diet was of worms,
And though at first they were upset,
They said "We'll trill like Birdie yet,"
And started singing semitones
On Things they dug up under stones.

At length one day at crack of dawn
Their trumpetings announced the morn.
The neighbourhood so rudely stirred
Not only gave them both the bird,
But further concerts they implied
Might end in elephanticide.

The Moral: Nature knows what's best.
And that's where Guinness stands the test,
For barley malt and yeast and hops
Make this a drink that's really tops.
And music-makers can go far
On several Guinness to the bar.

Guinness
is good for you—and me

G.E. 3675

the reactions of his then slender public, and of its self-appointed censors, to his disclosures (and, if so, for the best of reasons), or because he was doubtful, himself, how splendid certain types of sexual "domination," of the woman by the man, may really be. (Incidentally, the assumption—if made by Lawrence or by anyone—that in the sexual practice referred to by the Warden, it *is* the male who necessarily dominates, is highly questionable; since domination may derive as much from the temperament of either partner in a sexual act—whether female or male—as from the mere physical mechanics of the performance.)

For Lawrence, the great "sexual liberator," was as much a child of his nation as any of us. No Englishman, since the puritan occupation of our country, can write of sexual matters in an acceptive spirit: that is, with a simple recognition of physical fact prior to any consequent judgment of behaviour; and no Englishman can read such a writer in this spirit either. None of us, it seems, can assess the quality of sexual conduct from an essential initial awareness of our animal natures in their totality. Our whole sterile tendency, in considering sexual conduct, is to compartmentalise into categories (whereas few human creatures belong entirely to any one), to deny the essential unity of our animal and spiritual beings, and to draw vast conclusions about our fellow creatures from the cruel postures of our own denials. This factor—and the need to escape from it and reject it—gives even to some of Lawrence's writing about the most habitual sexual acts their note of frenzied affirmation and excessive protest.

This limitation to Lawrence's genius is utterly understandable, and in his writing about sex his greatest achievement is to have transcended the self-inflicted wounds of our society as superbly as he did. For when he is not protesting against our life-hating sexual codes, or embarking on shrill panegyrics of the sexual act as "a thing in itself," how magnificently he writes of human love! Who, since Burns or Shakespeare, has evoked pure sexual-spiritual love more ardently than he has in his finest pages? Which English writer, of any century indeed, can so startlingly shock his reader, holding listlessly the drab printed page, into acutely sharing the whole sensation human creatures feel when they love each other totally?

And the more one thinks of Lawrence's writing—of his criticism and poetry as much as of his novels—must it not seem that his great quality is precisely that his chief theme was not sex, but the whole of human life? That his preoccupation with sexuality reflects his wish

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to defy the morbid distortions of its real simplicity-in-complexity, which our culture had sought to refuse to him and to us all? That in trying to find balance and normality, he was forced sometimes, in his lonely struggle, to scream out in rage and pain? Yet from all these torments and fierce hatreds, there emerge passages of passionate serenity, wherein men and women are harmoniously at one with each other, and with a cherished and respected nature—these moments of joy and fulfilment being evoked in language of hypnotic beauty.

If such was his purpose—to restore to us the love and acceptance of our animal selves, and the understanding that all other parts of our natures cannot exist without the physical, nor it without all of them—then the "trial" of his work appears as a monstrous blasphemy, masking his message, re-imposing sick distortions he was desperately trying to overthrow.

On the decisions of this hateful trial, a one-man court of criminal appeal, in the person of the Warden of All Souls, has now passed adverse judgment; and pronounced it in terms this court itself would thoroughly understand. It is true that within its own terms of reference —clearly and carefully defined—the Warden's judgment is impeccable, and his formulation of it apt. But it is equally true that the demolition of this trial's validity had long been demonstrated with deadly effect by Dr. Leavis, and, in his case, on the only relevant basis for any consideration of D. H. Lawrence, which is that of his art, and our understanding of it. In addition, the particular aspect of the trial that interests Mr. Sparrow (and also the witnesses' misunderstanding of this theme) had already been displayed for our edification (or possibly tedium) in the pages of Encounter, as elsewhere. So that while Mr. Sparrow dots each equivocal *i*, and crosses each suspect *t*, with masterly effect, the total result of his intervention, by diverting attention yet again not merely to the exaggerations of Lawrence's sexual attitudes in general, but to this particular aspect of them (what one might call the "seven letter word," which the Warden spells out with forthright relish), will be further to distort what is vital and beautiful in Lawrence's art, and to draw—despite this bold candour about an irrelevance—yet another shabby veil over Lawrence's artistic and human achievement.

The tone of the piece is a coroner's inquesting on a corpse; or the Sabbath journalist's characteristic device of describing the sin with detailed precision, under pretext of definition and rebuke. The "witnesses" insulted Lawrence by making him out a literary sex maniac whose intentions were nevertheless honourable, and their scourge, the Warden, continues the good work by concentrating even more superfluously on the witnesses' failure to spot one specialised aberration. The "experts" are whipped, as they deserve, a point of no significance to anyone save scholars and sexual innocents is triumphantly established by an expert who is even more so... and who on earth cares about this, since neither the witnesses, nor their tormentor, nor their infantile academic sniping, nor the whole paraphernalia of the trial itself, have anything to do with Lawrence's writing? Who cares if dons, barristers, and pedants make idiots of themselves when they speak and write of art? That is what they are for, as Lawrence himself knew well when such people despised him during his lifetime, and as we can now understand when we see the learned erect academic empires by maligning his essential achievement.

Can we hope to have heard the last of this ridiculous episode? To forget the sight of these meddlesome fingers poking in Lawrence's sores, and wagging at one another? Can the damage now be gradually undone, and Lawrence's art emerge again, by thoughtful and loving reassessment? Can his works be left to a younger generation whom he helped to free, who couldn't care less what "practices" he may, or may not, have "advocated," and who love his books because, despite every imperfection, they celebrate life, and teach us to distrust all authority but our own hearts and brains?

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Old Lamps for Old

By Philip Toynbee

In the more complicated illuminations at Piccadilly Circus, the smiling features of a connoisseur can suddenly *replace* a glass of port. We know that the bright bulbs which produce each successive constellation are still there even when they are unlit. One of the useful tasks of criticism is to suggest that certain neglected lights should be switched on, for a period, and certain familiar ones extinguished. Revaluations is much too grand a word, since this particular task is concerned with anything but absolute judgments. I am imagining for the purposes of these notes an impossibly docile and very young writer who shall play the part of Trilby to my Svengali.

The Great Tradition may be a useful invention for critics, but the imaginative writer should have nothing to do with these grandiose high-roads which are laid so ruthlessly across the rich landscape of the past. For every writer must find his own tradition. And many great writers have derived far more benefit from minor predecessors or contemporaries than from the figures who were most admired in their own day.

Thus no more should be heard of *George Eliot* for at least ten years, and *Middlemarch* will be gently removed from the obedient hands of my Trilby. The same prohibition applies to *Henry James*, though *The Golden Bowl* might be allowed as an example of how an extreme fanaticism in almost any direction *may* lead to a visionary revelation. The spectacle of James cocooned in his own idiosyncrasies is such a strange one that it may help us to discover the strangeness in ourselves.

No novel by *Jane Austen* should be read more than once, and then only as a recognised indulgence.

It is high time that someone made a five-hundred-page anthology culled from the works of *D. H. Lawrence*. Half of this book would consist of poems and short stories, the other half of passages ruthlessly excised from the novels. This would be a very useful book.

In fact *Conrad* is the only luminary in this particular constellation who may safely be left alight. And even here, as in so many cases, we should trust more to our spontaneous reactions, however odd these may be, and less to the moral significance which has been extracted from this great writer.

Criticism, in passing, should once and for all abandon attempts to establish absolute and objective judgments. We all know that some books *are* absolutely better than others, but God alone knows where these absolute values are exhibited. Critics should be passionate, subjective, and polite. All they can ever do is to express a preference in various sets of subjective terms. And they should concern themselves as much as possible only with works which they admire and enjoy. For great criticism has been written in praise of bad books, but no great criticism has been written in dis-praise of good ones.

Generally speaking the time has come to extinguish *the Panoramists, the Constructivists, the Moralists, and the Inventors*. The time has come to re-illuminate *the Tough Visionaries*. There are some genuinely visionary writers and artists who deserve attention but not emulation because they left their private images and dreams in too soft and hazy a condition. Examples of this are Virginia Woolf and Chagall. And it now seems to be the case that *the Surrealists* created nothing of lasting value with the possible exception of a very few paintings by Marx Ernst. This is because they isolated a vital element in the Arts which should never have needed to be isolated and which is almost without value in isolation. All great art includes surrealism, and Bellini is far closer to the reality of dream than Magritte or Delvaux.

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The Unconscious is everything in art, and nothing. By itself it is nothing even to the artist himself. "What is writing," Goethe asked, "but this taking possession of the outer by the inner world?" The hard process of creation lies in this act of taking possession, and the subject and the object are of equal importance. It is the importance of the subject which has been so grimly neglected by recent criticism. Art is the imposition of the dream on the apparent substance of the world.

And it is certainly time that English writers paid attention to the surrealists if only to see where we must get back to, where we must start again from.

THE ENGLISH NOVEL OF THE FIFTIES. There is no clear or definable distinction between the novel and poetry: there is a clear and absolute distinction between the novel and sociology. Failure to recognise this very simple truth has led the English novel miles and miles into the wilderness. There is no need to mention the obvious names. It is enough to say that if one wishes merely to give an account of present-day relations between scientists and civil servants it would be misleading to call the result a novel. (Of course if one can dream one's own truth out of this recalcitrant material then it will prove as good as any other. There is no hierarchy of subjects.)

Mugging-up is a dangerous, though not necessarily a fatal practice for the novelist or poet. Everyone gathers more than enough natural material simply by being alive for a certain number of years. This natural material includes the books one has read by choice and with passion.

> "The engineer who thought I was nosing around for what I could put into my book, obtaining information like a spy, shared all the wrong notions of those writers who, in describing the sea or a ship, think it necessary to undergo special training in the navy or the merchant service so as to obtain 'first-hand experience of their subject,' and study nautical terms in order to make, as they think, their descriptions professionally accurate, but do not know that all the reality thus runs out between their fingers; whereas the true writing is precisely that of the ignorant concerned with the irrational, childlike images of his first impressions, securing for evermore the pristine truth in the rust-proof locket of the symbol."

> "A writer can only be general by being personal. Those general travel-books which tell us that the author was struck by the magnificent aspect of Sydney Harbour mean nothing because they suppress the individual impression which alone is susceptible of transmission to the general intelligence, because human."

Both quotations are from that neglected masterpiece, William Gerhardi's *Resurrection*. The English novel will not come to life again until these demands are remembered and understood.

AN EXAMPLE. *The Political Poetry of the Thirties* has been harshly criticised lately for being cliquey, middle-class, esoteric. In fact, of course, it had considerable virtues so long as it was all these things. When these poets tried to write simply and directly in order to appeal to a wide and working-class audience they wrote very badly indeed. Contrast two adjacent poems in Day Lewis's *Overtures to Death*. *Questions* is a good poem because it looks at the political choice without specifying it—which is to say that it generalises the *merely* political choice of that time into a general image of hesitation on the brink of life. What is more it is strictly personal and almost confessedly middle-class. *The Volunteer*—

> *Tell them in England, if they ask,*
> *What brought us to these wars....*

is direct, thoroughly intelligible, and impersonal. It is a very bad little poem indeed.

Auden's *Spain* is good in so far as it is a poem by "the ignorant concerned with the irrational, childlike images of his first impressions." At their best all these poets treated "reality" with the possessive arrogance which it deserves. At their best they took and used only those rays of the political spectrum which happened to penetrate the filters of their imaginations.

Until it is realised that the imaginative writer has unlimited rights over his material nothing can be understood. The poet refracts all that he receives, and he should be judged only by the quality of his refractions.

I HAVE SAID that the writers we need to-day are *the Tough Visionaries*. What follows are a few notes on some of them, but the list is certainly not to be thought of as a new canon to supplant an old one. If I really had a Trilby under my hypnotic eye I would impose nothing on her or him except absolute freedom to find what he needs among past and present writing. And all that I offer here is an opportunity to look, for a moment, in a rather different direction from the usual one.

GOETHE. The greatest and *richest* writer of the last two hundred years. And perhaps of all his works the ones which will most reward our attention are *Hermann und Dorothea* and *Die Wahlverwandschaften*. The first is in verse, the second in prose, and both are perfect

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illustrations of the way in which normal life can indeed be possessed by the inner world. If a writer chooses to deal with the domestic and commonplace, as many of our writers do, then let him study what *can* be done with this material in *Hermann und Dorothea*. But *Faust*. ... How do we dare to spare the time from it to read *Middlemarch*!

DICKENS. Every novel deserves to be read, and most of them should be read often. Not only is he the greatest of English novelists—and no alas about it—but he is the one who needs to be most innocently *received* at this moment. His faults are too obvious to be worth bothering with, and are not, in any case, the kind of faults which threaten us. Fantasy and nightmare; a marvellous and very proper inflation of the observed world. Larger than (waking) life, of course, but no larger than his vast and dreaming imagination truly makes it.

EMILY BRONTE. It seems that *Wuthering Heights* has been relegated to the position of a romance for adolescent girls. It is, of course, a great poetical novel, and the enduring proof that this unpopular phrase deserves to be rehabilitated.

DOSTOEVSKY. Yes; but the diligent explainers have a good deal to answer for. Here is an example of a great writer who has been nearly destroyed for many of us by elaborate interpretation. He is, above all, a mysterious and bewildering writer who should be allowed to mystify and bewilder us. It must be said that there are some writers whom it is wiser and more rewarding to misunderstand.

WHITMAN. A splendid example of a tough visionary, but at this moment a fearfully dangerous example. A great poet whose example has been disastrous.

THE PRINCIPAL ISSUE of these notes—dreamers against "realists"—has nothing to do with romanticism and classicism; and nothing to do with the usual distinction between personal and impersonal writing. No writer is more personal than Goethe—no writer less personal than Kerouac. The best means of transmitting a unique vision to the general intelligence may be by an elaborate process of distancing oneself from the final material. To know that one has *nothing but* one's personal vision of the world, aided, strengthened, deepened by all possible means, is a form of humility which is the opposite of egotism. And the apparently personal yawp is often a deadly submission to the merely expected outcry of a rebel or a victim.

The surrealists believed that every human being has a precious vision to impart. No theory is less susceptible of demonstration, but even if it were a false one it would still be true that no imaginative writer has anything of value to impart *except* his private vision of the world. If he discovers an inner sterility, or a mind which has been stifled to death by the theories of others, it is no use trying to enrich his imagination by studying the concentration camps or by living in Bolton. The result will be a piece of blasphemous book-making.

RIMBAUD. Above all for the prose *Illuminations*. As with so much of Whitman *Une Saison en Enfer* is a dangerous work of genius which can easily be misunderstood into an encouragement of Beatnik idiocy.

TOLSTOY. *War and Peace* to show what the panoramic novelist is up against. *The Kreutzer Sonata* to show what misapplied moralism can lead to. On no account *Anna Karenina*, which is a most dangerous influence; a great tragedy which seems imitable but which is beyond both our reach and our real needs.

BROWNING. At his best a great eccentric in the most literal and the noblest sense of the word. One might perhaps have guessed at Tennyson before he wrote a line: who could have foreseen this astonishing master of new forms, new idiom, new ranges of articulate experience?

At his worst a self-parodist of the most impossible kind. Great attention should be paid to that narrow dividing line which separates the eccentric, the personal, the visionary from the affected and idiosyncratic.

NERVAL. One of the great 19th-century dreamers. All the (too few) poems and stories.

MELVILLE. Ample attention has been paid to *Moby Dick* in America, but in England it is still regarded as a freakish and—catastrophic! —semi-mystical work. It is the only great modern epic and rich with lessons for us all.

IBSEN. Only *Peer Gynt*, but *Peer Gynt* assiduously. This is a poor man's *Faust* but far richer than most of the feasts to which we are currently invited. It goes without saying that we will have nothing to do with *An Enemy of the People*, etc., but the late symbolic plays are even more dangerous. Indeed the whole notion of conscious symbolism is a false escape from the wilderness of sociology. We have to find our own symbols for ourselves, by lonely and devoted exploration, *and without recognising them as symbols*. If it is held that *The Wild Duck* is a greater work than *Peer Gynt* then let us say that we need to write our own *Peer Gynt* before we can write our own *Wild Duck*.

MEREDITH. The best novels—*Harry Richmond*, *Beauchamp's Career*—deserve to be read with patience and generosity. We must recognise

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again the rich possibilities of a decorated, ornamental, and *frankly* artificial style. (Need it be said again that all writing is equally artificial, however much the artifice may take the form of a bluff hostility to "fine writing"?)

PATER. The most rewarding of the English æsthetes—and this is another term which deserves to be rescued from the bad company into which it has been thrust. Read *Gaston de Latour* and then *The Portrait of Dorian Gray* to learn the difference between good and bad æsthetic writing.

Any writer who is worth his salt should be capable of writing beautifully about beautiful things.

CHEKHOV. Everything he wrote. He has the absolute magician's touch: everything receives the inimitable light of his melancholy and comic imagination. However the Soviet actors may choose to play him, Chekhov is not a satirist but a loving illuminator of the human face and the natural world.

PROUST. His major fault—the unilluminated and nagging pursuit of a social and psychological detail—is a more inextricable fault than any of the vulgarities of Dickens. But he is the greatest poet-novelist of our century, and the first two volumes of *A La Recherche du Temps Perdu* constitute the greatest long poem of the century.

JOYCE. Of course. But not for any of his devices, which are his business alone. Not, above all, for the interior monologue as it has tumbled down into current use. In the hands of the supposed realists this is a devastating instrument of boredom.

For his audacities. To teach us to be bold.

MANN. Because his kind of complexity is the kind we need. His double-vision of the world, dry and passionate, mystical and realist, has provided a new dimension in the novel.

And, in general, a thoughtful study of all German literature, if only because this rich confusion of material has been so aridly neglected by most English writers and critics. Kleist, Büchner, Nietzsche, George, Rilke, Hesse, Wassermann....

ALAIN-FOURNIER. His perception that it is often the child's eye view which alone can bring the dulled adult world to life again.

ITALO SVEVO. *The Confessions of Zeno* still remains the greatest neglected masterpiece of the century. It is a work of *profound* humour and a wonderful corrective to the absurd modern separation of the comic from the tragic.

JULIEN GREEN. Perhaps this good novelist is a little too self-conscious in his creation of

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"atmosphere." But unless the visible world is seen as a mystery it is not being seen at all.

SARTRE. Only *La Nausée*. Perhaps at a later stage *Les Chemins de la Liberté* as a warning against the fatal abandonment of the private, the deep and replete in favour of the public, the panoramic, the empty.

DAVID GASCOIGNE. One of the very few English poets who absorbed both surrealism and psycho-analysis, to make something of his own which is both unique and beautiful.

THE PARISIAN AVANT-GARDE. We must swallow these writers down like a draft of medicine. Beckett, Ionesco, Robbe-Grillet... they didn't get to their various dead-ends for no good or instructive reason. They are writers who have grown just as desperate with their means of expression as they are desperate at the conditions of the species. Nobody who has failed to experience both forms of desperation will write anything of importance. Too many English writers seem to be quite unaware that there exists an urgent problem of expression. And by disregarding it they fail, of course, to solve it.

THE ENGLISH NOVEL SINCE 1920. There are many brightly illuminated bulbs which should be instantly extinguished. In their place I would re-illuminate Gerhardi, Wyndham Lewis, John Cowper Powys, Katherine Mansfield, Firbank, David Jones, Virginia Woolf, Henry Green, Denton Welch, and William Sansom. These writers are of very different statures, and there are some whom I do not particularly enjoy. But all have shared a passion for private exploration and for the truth of their own dreams.

Virginia Woolf was *right* about Wells, Bennett, and Galsworthy, although it is now the fashion to take their side against her.

KOKOSCHKA, KLEE, BACON. These painters never doubted that the amorphous stuff of their dreams must be squeezed, coaxed, *ground* through the elaborate machinery of a developing technique. How many talented English novelists spend as much time on considering and improving their technique as a good painter does?

OBSERVANT and knowledgeable readers will have been smiling—without ill-will, I hope—at the obvious thread of special pleading which runs all through these notes. It is certainly true that a number of hostile reviews of my own recent book have helped, by my own revulsion and even fury, to enlighten me about my future work. By the nature and quality of their disparagement I was persuaded of my own total opposition to so many current attitudes. That is one way at least in which a reviewer may be of service to a writer, though I would hope that it is not often my own way.

But, after all, it is more likely that a book springs from certain ideas than that the ideas are called in later to defend the book. And the ideas may still be good even if the attempt to make use of them is not. And a book may be good—it may indeed!—even when it is inspired by apparently ludicrous ideas.

A War and Its Lessons

By D. W. Brogan

FROM ONE POINT OF VIEW, the Franco-Prussian war is an episode, dramatic, important for the political history of France, but basically merely a ratification of a power shift that was occurring and which, at the most, the war accelerated. Geology and human ecology had already decided that the Germany of the Second Reich would replace France as the dominant continental power. True, the Prussian victory meant that the Second Reich started out with its wedding present of half the iron ore of Lorraine (not yet known to be important), but that merely strengthened the already rising power against the declining power (which, in any case, kept but could not fully exploit the iron ore of the part of Lorraine not annexed). The future was to Krupps against Le Creusot; to Hamburg against Le Havre; to the vigorously reproducing Germans against the slowly declining French.

Then, as a war, it was no great shakes. Total German casualties were less than those of the Americans in the Korean police operation. France suffered more but the greatest material damage was done in the civil war of the Commune, for which defeat gave the excuse or the provocation. The crushing indemnity of £200,000,000 was quickly paid off and, in less than twenty years' time, France was the second military power in Europe, more formidable than

The Franco-Prussian War. By MICHAEL HOWARD. Rupert Hart-Davies, 63s. *Democratic Despot: A Life of Napoleon III*. By T. A. H. CORLEY. Barrie & Rockcliffe, 42s.

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the colossus with legs and trunk of clay, the Tsardom. And the military interest of the war (which is great) was almost hidden by the myth-making of the victors and of the vanquished. There were lessons to be learned from the six-months' campaign but, as 1914 showed, neither side learned them.

How then can we justify so lengthy and expensive a book as Mr. Howard has produced? For military history "buffs" like myself, the question is easily answered. This is the best book on the war, by a long way, that I have ever read and almost every page delights someone who thinks that the art of war deserves serious study. But we are a small body, especially in this country where one part of the literate population has never taken war seriously since horses went out and the other half sees it simply as a crime which, no doubt, it is (but look at all the books on Lizzie Borden and Madeleine Smith!). Almost the only people in Britain who ever did take the study of war or the preparation for it seriously, were the old-fashioned Liberals like Cardwell, Childers, and Haldane, which is one reason why the only war that we have ever entered, in *some* degree of preparation, was that of 1914. Wars cannot be waged by the Cavalry Club or by the Fabian Society (*vide* our present preposterous position). If we are to avoid both atomic war and yet not be nibbled to death, we need intelligent reflection on the problems of "conventional" war and Mr. Howard's book may even help to open the mind of the Minister of Defence (who is he, by the way?).

First of all, Mr. Howard examines the theory that makes of the Franco-Prussian War a "model" war like the Campaign of Austerlitz or, if you like, the invasion of France and the Low Countries in 1940. The apparent ease of the German victory, the capture of the two professional French armies in roughly two months after the opening of the campaign, the successful cultivation of the legend by which Moltke, like Bismarck, was all foreseeing, the legend of a war in which all went by plan, in which Roon could shut his desk and Moltke let the *Aufmarsch* proceed like a controlled scientific experiment, hid many awkward facts—and prevented many useful lessons from being learned. Not, possibly, till the publication of Meckel's *Ein Sommersnachtstraum* in 1888 was some of the truth told or recalled. (Meckel made the new Japanese army that excelled the Prussian record of 1870 in 1894 and 1904–5).

Of course, the survivors of the war in Germany could, if they thought fit, have told a different story. They had seen even Prussian discipline break, had seen the Prussian Guard laid out in swathes at St. Privat, had learned

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of the power of modern rifle-fire directed from strong positions. The lesson had to be learned again by the Russians falling before the Remingtons of the Turks at Plevna in 1877, by the Japanese at Port Arthur and Mukden—and, on a colossal scale, by both French and Germans in 1914. (It is a hard job teaching soldiers.) Of course, as Mr. Howard points out, the Germans slowly did learn the elements of tactics in the course of the war. There were no more parade-ground formations, no more rehearsals for the first day of the Somme. But, in general, it was thought that the Prussians had found the perfect recipe for victory. There was the General Staff (this, as Mr. Howard points out, *was* a real and fruitful innovation). There was the loose command from the top; there was the spirit of attack, the reliance of one corps commander, one army commander on another, and the result, victory. The recipe was tried again in 1914 and it didn't work. In part, because the defensive had even more formidable weapons than the *chassepot* and the *mitrailleuse*; in part because the French had learned something (how to mobilise, for instance, and how to move troops. It was the efficiency and flexibility of the French military railway system that made the Marne possible. Joffre had been a railway specialist).

But the Prussians won, didn't they? Yes, but not so easily as they made out. The French lost, didn't they? Yes, but not so inevitably as *they* made out. Perhaps the most impressive novelty of this most remarkable book is Mr. Howard's insistence not on the fact that Bazaine lost an opportunity for a real victory before Metz, a victory that Wellington or Lee or Joffre would have won, but that the French situation was not nearly as desperate after the first frontier battles as is usually made out. It could be argued (Mr. Howard does not do this) that the French suffered a far greater defeat in the opening week of the campaign of 1914 than they had done in the corresponding period in 1870, that the younger Moltke did a better job than his uncle, that Klück was superior to Steinmetz (this is not saying much). Why? There seem to be two reasons. First of all, the French plans were so muddled, their execution so incompetent, that a rationalist like Moltke was baffled. I was once told that Napoleon always planned for the wisest and for the most foolish thing the enemy could do (thus he was able to cope with Prussian folly before Jena), Moltke only for the wisest and the French high command had no wisdom. Secondly, the French in 1914 had a plan, Plan XVII, based on a totally erroneous estimate of German strength. They led with their chin, an error multiplied by the murderously absurd tactical doctrines of the "Young Turks." Why, then, did the French survive in 1914 and collapse in 1870 (and 1940)?

Mr. Corley's interesting, if not very profound, book suggests some of the answers. The Second Empire was in 1870 a far less stable political structure than the Third Republic was in 1914. (1940 and 1958 were to show that this virtue is not inherent in republican régimes.) The war might not have come in 1870 at all, if the Empire had felt secure. It might have come later, but it seems to me it was not *quite* as inevitable as was some general European war in the first part of this bloody century. Once started, politics dominated strategy or even common sense. The Emperor, always ill, often in agony, *had* to go to the front and pretend to be commander-in-chief. He and the Empress could not abandon Paris, so the preposterous march to Sedan had to be undertaken. After the proclamation of the Third Republic, the imperial authority was still formally represented in Metz and the chances of a Bonapartist recovery were not negligible as Mr. Corley stresses. And the army reflected this political situation. Nearly all the weaknesses that prevented an effective mobilisation plan or the creation of effective reserves arose from the need for a politically reliable army. So there was no territorial recruitment and regiments were quartered far from their dépôts. It is possible that the absence, in peace time, of any cadres higher than the regimental unit had a political source.

Of course, none of the chances lost by Bazaine (and Gambetta) would have given France a victory, a recovery of the "natural" position of, say, 1812. But if Bazaine had been more than a brave and wrongly promoted N.C.O., if Gambetta and his colleagues had taken a more cool view of the situation, had been less hopeful of delivering *"la ville lumière"* in a hurry, the Germans might have had to break up the siege of Paris and Bismarck's nightmare of a European diplomatic intervention, possibly even of an Austrian military mediation, might have become a reality.

It is easy enough to expose Bazaine (though Mr. Howard, with characteristic candour, not only acquits him of treason but calls our attention to a very recent study defending his conduct in Metz). It is easy enough to show that if Gambetta had not been in such a hurry (and if Bazaine in Metz had shown a tithe of the resource and tenacity of Osman Ghazi in Plevna), if Failly had not been such an ass, if the Guard had been "given" in August, the war would have been different, not, indeed, in the sense that France could have won it, but that something like a compromise peace might have been made, with no more lasting

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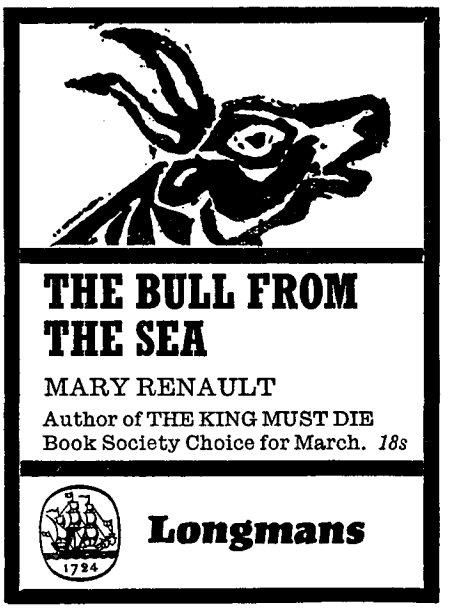
scars than were made by Villafranca or the Peace of Paris in 1856—or the German surrender in May, 1945, or the Japanese in August, 1945. *Dis aliter visum*. But luck favours the fortunate as it does the brave. All the Prussian mistakes were recovered from; the French windfalls were not exploited. So came the Peace of Frankfurt; so came the mutilation of France, so came the impossibility of a new concert of Europe, for French resentment of the loss of Alsace-Lorraine was a far more formidable force than the grievance of the loss of the Rhine frontier in 1814 and 1815.

IN THE NOT VERY LONG RUN, the consequences of the pretty nearly unconditional surrender of 1871 were serious. The Germans learned (as some of the wiser Germans feared) to believe that force could settle all; they could cast their sword into the scales like Brennus if the worst—or best—came to the worst. And so we have to-day the wrecking of the Second Reich (the Third was no more a real political organisation than was the Napoleonic Empire of 1812). To-day, Bismarck's Reich is reduced roughly to Napoleon's Confederation of the Rhine *plus* the Rhineland *minus* Saxony. France is the ally, though not the master of the new Confederation. We may ask with "little Peterkin" what good came of it all? I can't think of much or any. True, the German victory of psalm-and-hymn-singing virtuous Protestants (*so like the Prince Consort*) gratified the mid-Victorians. Walter Bagehot and Frederick Harrison were exceptions among the English *intelligentsia* in having doubts about the total desirability of the triumph of Bismarck's Prussia. It should be remembered that the defeat of Napoleon III was also a defeat of Pius IX and so gratifying to what was—and is—a Protestant if not a notably Christian people. (Mr. Howard's German soldiers are forever singing Lutheran hymns. What did the Catholics sing and what the Poles of the Fifth Corps who bore so much of the burden of the early fighting?) But there can be no doubt that religious belief or passion reconciled the Anglo-Saxon world to the victory of Prussia. Yet that victory was to mark a turn in the tide. But for Bismarck's triumph, the lesson of power in the modern world might have been given by the victory of the North in the Civil War. "Government of the People" might have been a maxim for *Realpolitik* not "Blood and Iron." Gladstone and the shade of Lincoln had to fight against the prestige of Bismarck. The British and American armies adopted the *Pickelhaube*. The Japanese decided to get rid of their French military mission and learn from the Prussians. And the already great intellectual prestige of the old German culture was reinforced by what the world still thinks of as overwhelmingly impressive, victory in war. I can remember suggesting to an enlightened teacher in Oxford that the prestige of the *Monumenta* and of Mommsen and Du Bois Reymond owed a lot to Sedan. As a good liberal he was shocked, but I was right.

It was not only in the political field that the German victory clouded counsel. The lessons of the American Civil War were lost, yet the battles of 1870 were fought under the sceptical eye of one of the first modern soldiers, Philip Sheridan. As Dr. Luvaas has recently shown, soldiers were beginning to learn them when in 1870 Wörth and Gravelotte occulted the lessons of Gettysburg and Cold Harbor. This forgetfulness was paid for in 1914.

MR. HOWARD'S BOOK IS so near perfection that only the reviewer's trade-union principles force him to make one or two minor criticisms. Is it quite certain that the Krupp breech-loaders fired faster than the French guns? (The problem of recoil was not solved till the French, nearly a generation later, invented the "75.") Something ought to be allowed not only for the badness of



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French fuses, but for the French tactical system of moving guns around all the time. It was very smart—like the tricks at a royal tournament, but as was said in another connection, *"magnifique mais pas la guerre."* If the French didn't know how to handle guns, neither side knew how to handle cavalry (assuming that cavalry had any further role). Sheridan must have gazed sardonically at the parade nonsense of the *"arme blanche."* That was not how that great infantry soldier handled horsemen. Von Bredow's "death ride" paid off, but the repeated French cavalry charges merely earned the encomiums of the old King of Prussia: "The brave fellows." A curious Frenchman, looking into the Prussian military medical archives, discovered that exactly *six* Germans were killed by sword wounds in the war. In 1914, nevertheless, both sides had great cavalry corps complete with lances as well as sabres. Even the British army which, after South Africa, *did* know a little better, went in for charges. I was forced as a schoolboy to learn some verses by Sir Henry Newbolt on "The Charge of the Ninth Lancers." And there is a deep symbolic significance in the jacket of this book which shows the *chasseurs d'Afrique* being mown down by what, judging from their uniforms, are mere *landwehr*.

One other and important point should be made. It is a commonplace that the "People's War" after Sedan took the professional soldiers by surprise. The French and German soldiers alike thought it was nothing but a bloody nuisance. It was much more than that. It bred legends and it bred hate.

The virulence of the hatred of the victors for the vanquished came in part from the irritation of the professional who has won, but also from something artificial in the German patriotism of the time. Moltke was not a tolerant professional like, say, Lord Montgomery. But then it was more or less of an accident that he was serving in the Prussian not the Danish army. Had Napoleon's empire lasted, who knows, he might have served Napoleon II? And von Verdy du Vernois, whom Mr. Howard cites more than once, was the son of a page of the Comte d'Artois (Charles X). Perhaps it was not so much hatred for the French as enemies as hatred for a people who had abandoned the House of France for the Bonapartes, which animated him? However that may be, the legend of the *franc tireurs*, of Prussian plundering, of the scatological tastes of the invaders became part of the French national legend. What did *not* become part of the French or German national legend was a novelty on which Mr. Howard rightly insists.

Modern war is basically a matter of total mobilisation and it was the improvised armies and supply services of Gambetta and Freycinet which cast the shadow of things to come. They called in amateur soldiers and civilian experts; they tried the most irregular experiments. They didn't win but they upset the efficient and victorious machine of Moltke's imaginings. It seems to me that Mr. Howard is unjust both to Gambetta and to Freycinet whose personality is misrepresented. (Freycinet, in his long political life, didn't get the name of the "white mouse" for nothing.) Perhaps the real revenge of the "Government of National Defence" was had in the two world wars, when the Germans never managed nearly as well as did their enemies in mobilising their economic resources and saving war from merely military control. (If it be said that Hitler overruled the soldiers, he sometimes did it for good reasons and he was more blinded by mere ideology than *Maître* Gambetta ever was.)

A lot of our modern world can only be understood in terms of this brief conflict and Mr. Howard has produced a guide to it which is both a work of admirable scholarship and a work of art. It is not only a model of lucidity but it is again and again enlivened by admirable touches of detail. Thus, Mr. Howard notes the bad impression made on the battered but not demoralised army in Metz by the vast lumbering train of the imperial household. He does not note that one of the spectators of this odious anachronism was a young aspirant for Polytechnique who had come from the Pyrenees to Metz for an examination. He never forgot it; his name was Ferdinand Foch.

FOCH WAS ONLY the most celebrated of the young Frenchmen who made the army their career and looked forward to revenging Metz and Sedan. In France, the whole conception of an officer's career was changed. No longer were the products of Polytechnique side-tracked. Foch was a gunner; Joffre an engineer. No longer was there such lavish promotion from the ranks which had produced Bazaine and the semi-literate officers who astonished the Prussians who made them prisoners. The old dashing court officers like Gallifet went out of fashion. I can remember a distinguished old French general, who was one of the re-makers of the French artillery, telling me of the contrast between his generation and their immediate superiors, officers of the Imperial Guard and still not *"sérieux"* by the austere standards of the younger generation who were bent not only on emulating Moltke but Scharnhorst and Clausewitz. It was the "Prussian schoolmaster" who had won, whether

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it was the schoolmaster who produced the literate privates (many of them wearing glasses! so the astonished rumour went) or the teachers in the Prussian military academies which had produced von Verdy, von der Goltz, and the other young officers innocent of battle experience who had been more than a match for the veterans of Africa, the Crimea, Italy. Even in England, the hint was taken. The purchase of commissions was abolished, the normal entry was now through Woolwich or Sandhurst, but the loophole of the militia was left (so we got Sir John French and Sir Henry Wilson). Books and brains (except possibly in the cavalry) were now assets, or more accurately: birth, money, bravery, social graces were no longer quite enough. The Prussian army was described as "science in a *Pickelhaube*." War was now a science not an art.

And it was an industry. For the Prussians had shown that you could make highly effective soldiers out of civilians, send them back to civil life and call them up again. The army was now "the nation in arms." All military powers, Britain included, began to rely on reservists. The day of the "old sweat" was over. So it was possible to have bigger and bigger armies, to put millions in the field where it had been difficult to muster a few hundred thousands. And this increased the advantages of the rich industrialised powers with a good transport system. So Russia and Austria as military powers entered into a concealed decline. All young males passed through the army; the military share of the budget grew every year. And the lessons of the war of 1870 were more and more misunderstood. The French were again surprised by the effectiveness of the German reserve corps in 1914 and learned, too late, the folly of blind attacks in the manner of St. Privat. The Austrians and Russians rushed to invasion—and defeat—and the Germans, foiled at the Marne, built a new Gravelotte–St. Privat position running from the Alps to the sea and only finally lost when they attacked outside it. The siege of Petersburg would have been a more profitable study than the dream of a quick six-weeks' campaign culminating in a *"Schlacht ohne Morgen."* And the lesson of the economic mobilisation of France *after* Sedan (it had begun under the energetic imperial minister, Clément Duvernois) was not learned by either side. Walter Rathenau learned to his horror on the day war broke out in 1914, that the infallible Great General Staff had made no preparations of stockpiling raw materials. The French allotted 50,000 men to work to supply munitions to an army of millions! All the real lessons of 1870–71 were forgotten; only the wrong ones were learned.

An Inspector Calls

Potbank. By Mervyn Jones. *Secker & Warburg,* 12s. 6d.

Since *Potbank* is described on its cover as "Number One in a series of investigations into Life in Britain 1961," there seems to be some point in making one's criticism as broad and general as possible, in the interests of the series as a whole. Clearly, it is an excellent thing that life in Britain should be "investigated," and that the investigation would take account of that strange foreign country, "the provinces," which begins where London Transport ends, and into whose deserts and jungles most of those who claim to represent British opinion take the greatest care never to venture. But there are dangers also. A great deal depends on the point of view from which the investigation is carried out. To approach people in the natural setting of their jobs and their homes, one needs a great deal of humility, and a complete freedom from the kind of smugness and condescension that begins by assuming that the people under examination are less progressive, less enlightened and intelligent, than oneself. Now this particular series, so far as one can judge from the names already announced, appears in danger of falling into the hands of the "progressives" of the *New Statesman* belt—most of whom, and especially that *chapelle* described as "New Left," are puffed like cobras with the accumulated holiness of years of being in the right. Capital punishment, the H-bomb, disapproval of Washington's attitude to Cuba, suspicion of Adenauer and de Gaulle, hatred of Big Business—you name it, they have it.

Now the blunt fact is that if an investigation of the lives and attitudes of the English people is going to be undertaken from a telescope mounted on the roof of the Partisan coffee-house, nothing but failure can result. Because the bulk of the people, measured by those standards, are bound to seem quaint, old-fashioned, reactionary. They do not get up petitions about hanging, they are not unilateralist disarmers, they are content to stay in Nato and accept the broad outline of Western policy. Doubtless there is a great deal of short-sightedness and selfishness in their attitudes, as there is in the attitudes of every populace. They deserve to be lectured. They deserve, on occasion, to be downright insulted so as to shake them out of their lethargy. But it will not do to approach them patronisingly; not because a patronising attitude is sinful (though it is), but because it is intellectually hampering. If you begin by assuming that you are further advanced than the people

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you are studying, you will understand nothing vital about them.

Mr. Jones, in this respect, is not a major offender. He evidently felt a good deal of respect for the people of the Potteries, and this respect helped him to understand some important things about them. He sees, for instance, that workers in the pottery industry have a deep psychological resistance to anything streamlined, time-saving, slick, or up-to-date. This makes them at times absurdly conservative in small things, resisting innovations which would make their work easier and their pay-packets larger; but in the main it is a life-enhancing attitude. It is at the root of their deep feeling that they are not just factory-hands, bartering so many hours of each day against a living wage, but craftsmen, delighting in an inherited skill. Everyone who goes among the potters notices this attitude; in 1933, when the "depression" was at its nadir, J. B. Priestley's *English Journey* took him through deserts of hopelessness and resentment, but when he reached Stoke-on-Trent he found the pottery worker, even then, buoyed up by this mediæval sense of belonging to a "mystery," a brotherhood centred on the sheer satisfaction of handling clay.

> Never have I seen another substance that set up such an itch in the hand. All your manhood —or boyhood—ached to be at it. The lovely stuff simply asked for trouble. This was not a feeling peculiar to me, the mere visitor. Quite obviously all the men there were in thrall to it too. They had been working with this stuff for years and years, had served seven years' apprenticeship to it, but they too were still happy to be setting about it. *Whirr!*—and there was a tiny dark cascade of clay, the tool went biting in and in, until the man on the job suddenly stopped, took a pair of calipers, made a swift measurement, and found that his eye had been right and no more was necessary. Do not tell me that these fellows were not enjoying their work. If one of them had been compelled to stay in the room without laying a finger on a bit of clay, he would have gone mad.

Mr. Jones does not write about clay in quite such emotional terms as Mr. Priestley, because 1961 is not 1933, and he knows that if he talked about people itching to get their hands into clay he would be told at once that they should have been allowed to play with their excrement when they were babies. Still, for a child of our killjoy age, he puts it fairly strongly in his own idiom:

> Always the practical tug toward speed—profit for the employer, bigger piecework earnings for the worker—was locked with an emotional tug back to craftsmanship. . . . All the makers had a strong sense that the clay was not an inert substance like wood or metal, to be carved or chopped into size, but an element with its own personality, yielding and co-operative if you treated it right, wilful and apt to escape you if you handled it insultingly. Earthenware, according to Dan, was fairly easy to control, but not china. Why not? "Well, you see, it's alive."

All this is very sympathetic to anyone surveying the working life of the people in our time. That an industry can still be run at a profit by workers with the psychology of craftsmen is a good thing and seems good however progressive you are. It is only when the pottery worker leaves his bench that Mr. Jones begins to have trouble in understanding him. His book has colour and movement as long as he is describing people at work, but once outside the factory gates it becomes a record of frustration and incomprehension. Things change slowly in the Potteries; everything here is insulated from outside influence by the fact that population does not flow in and out; one does not see many children about; the six towns are all quiet and law-abiding—that would be a fair summary of his conclusions. Except for his descriptions of the physical appearance of the Potteries, which are admirably skilful and evocative, the book is essentially the record of an attempt that failed. Mr. Jones went on to the Potteries in search of understanding, didn't get it, but had to write the book just the same because he had agreed to do so.

What went wrong? In trying to sort out the reasons one runs first of all into the usual coyness that haunts all books of this kind. It ought to be a rule that everyone who writes about a community should begin by saying, in a few sentences, exactly what were the terms of his presence in it. For some reason, nobody is willing to do this. All books of this kind enter *in medias res* with the narrator going down in the pit-cage, or pacing the sea-washed deck of the trawler, or carrying the milk-pails over to the cow-shed at dawn, as naturally as if he had never been anywhere else. Thus Mr. Jones begins baldly, "Ashford Street was my home during those weeks last summer when I lived and worked in the Potteries." How many weeks? Where did he work? Did he take a job at a potbank and try to pass as just another workman, or did he openly announce that his purpose in going among the potters was to write a book about them? The latter, obviously, since an unskilled worker, appearing from nowhere, would not be taken on in any department where he would see the real work of the factory going on, nor would Mr. Jones be successful in impersonating a migrant unskilled worker, even if he carried a parrot on his shoulder and told tall stories about being a

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sea-cook on the Venezuela run. So what happened? Did his publisher approach the management of the factory and arrange for Mr. Jones to be on the scene for some weeks? And who paid him? The factory? That isn't very likely; in these cases the publisher usually pays the expenses. Then in what sense can Mr. Jones claim to have "lived and worked in the Potteries"? He lived there, it is true, for an unspecified time, during which he worked—for his publisher; but this is not the same thing.

The point is important because industrial workers, particularly in a tightly-woven and self-aware community like that of the Potteries, are not Australian bush aborigines, to be studied from the outside. They are complicated human beings, and if they think anyone is there to study them they will reveal just as much and as little as they care to. For Mr. Jones to represent himself as suddenly appearing among them, without explanation, shows an unwillingness to recognise this which amounts to baulking at the first hurdle. To be fair, he is not secretive about it; once we get into the book we find plenty of stray indications of the footing he was on. "People in other departments, when I said I had put in a spell in the sliphouse, usually made a face and remarked, 'Well, I suppose you've got to see everything.'" They, at any rate, were clear about what Mr. Jones was doing in the factory. They knew he was observing them. And the probability is that they were observing him quite as shrewdly. (All books of this kind ought to contain an appendix consisting of tape-recorded interviews on the theme, "What did *you* make of *him*?")

One thing Mr. Jones's temporary workmates would probably have twigged straight away was that he was Progressive. Religion, for instance, is clearly, for him, not a living issue. Quite early in the book there is a description of Doreen, "a strapping Irish girl," who was a Catholic; every time she polished a cup "her big breasts swayed like punchballs and an outsize crucifix danced between them, a sight which would have inspired a monk to sublimated ecstasy." Gay little quips about monks, which I suppose are a kind of *tic doloureux* one gets after a few years of writing for the *New Statesman*, serve to indicate that one finds the religious life deliciously quaint; but if Mr. Jones wanted to understand the Potteries he would have done better to try to think himself out of this attitude, for religious passions burn high in that district. Mr. Jones couldn't help seeing this, for he notes casually that a lot of people belong to the chapels. "Most of the chapels are mean and ugly, and seem to cherish their traditions of poverty; but they never look neglected or deserted." Mr. Jones

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didn't actually go into one of these thriving chapels—that would be asking too much, no doubt—but he is informed enough to know that they represent something very central in the life of the district. "Wesley and the other evangelists of his time were mightily successful in this part of England, largely because of the estrangement between the Church and the poor." (And did this estrangement not extend to other parts of the country?) "A potter named William Clowes was the founder of Primitive Methodism, whose first chapel was built at Tunstall in 1810."

I AM GLAD Primitive Methodism gets into Mr. Jones's book, even in so glancing a fashion. Actually the prime mover was a man called Hugh Bourne, a carpenter, who from 1807 onwards used to hold gigantic open-air revivalist meetings on Mow Cop, inspired by accounts of the camp meetings in America. From these meetings, Primitive Methodism was born; and the history of North Staffordshire is incomprehensible without a visit to Mow Cop. There it stands, this strange conical little hill at the north end of the Potteries, just where the straggling streets begin to melt into the level green of the Cheshire Plain; from its summit, where some 18th-century connoisseur planted a Gothick ruin, one sees the pottery towns spread out like a smoke-blotched map; turning the other way, the eye surveys miles of tranquil pastureland, with Liverpool and Manchester vaguely discernible as smudges in the distance. The setting is ideal for the Pisgah-visions of an industrial age: the religious emotions that sprang up at Bourne's camp-meetings were, I should say, compounded about equally of the harshness and narrowness of Staffordshire working-class life in the early 19th century, and of the mystical emotions engendered by the place itself. To understand the Potteries without going to Mow Cop is as impossible as to understand Rome without going to St. Peter's. It is one of the two central clues to the district: the other being Stoke City Football Club.

Since his visit took place in the summer, Mr. Jones also left out the football. As if dimly conscious of the hugeness of this gap, he cast about for some mass spectator-sport to go to, and, rightly realising that cricket has never really caught on in the Potteries, decided to spend an evening watching motor-cycle speedway racing at the Sun Street stadium, Hanley. We get about six pages of this, and the result is an accurate description of any speedway meeting anywhere. ("The riders were magnificent in battle array," etc.) Apart from the by now expected reference to the quietness and reticence of everyone present, these pages tell us nothing about the Potteries; speedway racing attracts a specialised crowd, mostly devotees of the motor-cycle, who consider themselves cool-headed connoisseurs and do not go wild with excitement any more than the spectators of, say, beagling. As usual, Mr. Jones failed to get into conversation with anyone who might have filled him in on the background; of speedway racing he says, "This is a new sport in the Potteries; the first season, I think, was 1958." Actually, the Sun Street track has been in existence since at least 1938, when it was used for the first attempt to popularise midget-car racing, a sport imported from America which never caught on in this country; in 1939 it was absorbed, or re-absorbed, into the motor-cycle speedway league, and, except for the war years, has been flourishing ever since, with a peak boom between about 1946 and 1950.

Sport, then, is out. Religion is, virtually, out. Convivial merry-making is out, for though Mr. Jones's visit took place in the summer, he missed the "Wakes." Finally, and perhaps most regrettably of all, music is out. Once again, we have to blame the summer season; music, and especially choral singing, always shuts down during the summer when key performers are likely to be away on their holidays. But really—to offer to write about the Potteries and say nothing about its musical tradition! Not even to spend an hour leafing through, say, Reginald Nettel's *Music in the Five Towns*!

I AM NOT JUST SCORING points off Mr. Jones. The people of the city he visited, and an account of which he proffers in a series calling itself *"Britain Alive,"* are different in many ways from their Midland neighbours. Geographically isolated over many generations, absorbed in a specialised occupation, they have become a race on their own, a race of whom no satisfactory account exists. Even genetically, they are unusual; I suspect a very high proportion of Welsh blood, perhaps brought in when the labour force was rapidly enlarged in the 18th century. The blurb to Mr. Jones's book makes the obligatory mention of Arnold Bennett, but Bennett left the Potteries too early to understand what it offered in terms of a way of life. His view of the Potteries was curiously external; for instance, he represents the people as reticent and taciturn, as if they were Mr. Priestley's Yorkshire characters. In fact, Potteries people are volatile and talkative; repartee is their natural medium; the wisecrack, which is not a native English form and which is relatively unknown even among Cockneys, is their natural response to a situation. They are taciturn before strangers, and Bennett, owing to having left the district at an age when his character was

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still to form, saw them with the eye and heard them with the ear of a stranger.

Am I saying, then, that no visitor from outside can ever hope to draw a convincing portrait of the citizens of Stoke-on-Trent? No: only that it needs patience and time; the apparently unemotional exterior, the decorous day-to-day behaviour, mask an inner fire which flames out only at certain predicted and agreed-on points: in religion, in music, and at Stoke City football ground. Mr. Jones missed these three facets of Potteries life, and as a result his book fails to convey the nature of that life, in spite of his sharpness of eye, his skilful writing, his agreeable sense of humour. And why did he miss them? This is where we come to the root criticism, the warning that one feels to be necessary for the series as a whole. Cleverness, quick-wittedness, are not enough; even a few weeks on the spot are not enough; one needs, also, a certain basic humility before the subject. Mr. Jones gives, a little, the impression of having his mind too firmly made up in advance as to what was interesting and worthy of attention, and what wasn't. Production methods, social customers, sexual taboos, were O.K. topics. Going to chapel, singing vast choral works, cheering on Stanley Matthews, weren't. As a result, the passion, the emotional and idealistic strain in these people, hardly gets into his book. If the whole series is like this, the gulf between the intelligentsia and the English people is likely to remain as wide as ever.

John Wain

The Age of Treason

Treason in the Twentieth Century. By MARGARET BOVERI, translated by JONATHAN STEINBERG. *Macdonald*, 35s.

THIS long, intensely interesting and maddening book purports to be a study of treason in our time. Dame Rebecca West, surely an authority on the subject, reviewed it in the *Sunday Telegraph* and said that a book which barely mentions the Rosenbergs, hardly touches on Fuchs, and devotes more than a third of its length to the German Resistance and a great many pages to espionage can scarcely substantiate the claim implicit in the title of the English edition.*

Furthermore, one of the themes of this book and its major conclusion is the tentative suggestion that what all these people who acted or spoke against their country or in the interests of its enemies had in common was a fundamental dislike of Western, bourgeois-dominated society as it has existed since the French Revolution. Some looked forward to an egalitarian, some back to an authoritarian, society, but all, or almost all, were disgusted with the materialistic, money-conscious world of the 19th and 20th centuries. Frau Dr. Boveri even believes that these people may foreshadow the wave of the future, a great socialist-conservative religious reorientation of thought that will sweep away the dingy, petty, mercenary considerations that have governed political action for these last seven generations. Whether her diagnosis of the past is any more open to substantiation than her prognosis for the future is hard to say: such huge generalisations more or less defy rational analysis. But they were too much for Miss West. If George Blake and his kind represent the future, she concluded, we should all march to Trafalgar Square, and sit down, and demand that the greatest possible number of hydrogen bombs be set off at once.

That a writer as empirical, as common-sensible, as Anglo-Saxon in the best sense, as is Miss West should be irritated by the heavy Teutonic system-mongering in which Dr. Boveri indulges is hardly surprising. The book *is* maddening. And does it makes it better or worse that Dr. Boveri seems herself to harbour doubts about her own mental processes? She specifically states, towards the end of her book, that cold logic suitable for dealing with mathematical symbols makes a repellent impression when applied to human activities. (Rather typically, she maintains that the substitution of the quasi-scientific metre for the human foot as the standard linear measurement characterises the false and inhuman quality of post-1789 Western civilisation.) Yet her mental conditioning seems to be such that she cannot resist expressing her dislike of system in systematic and bogusly scientistic terms, as when she attempts to explain, or explain away, her traitors and resisters in the most tedious and old-fashioned semi-Freudian manner, with reference to broken homes and so on. Yet, with equal determination, she pulls herself up short. Enough of theory, she seems to say, time after time: now for the facts. But before we know, perhaps before she knows, where the facts are taking us, another theory, another semi-scientific attempt at systematisation threatens to engulf us once again. And as always happens when people attempt to evaluate and compare

* In a letter published by the *Sunday Telegraph* since this review was written Dr. Boveri explains that in a second volume, already published in German, she does discuss these persons. Apparently her English publisher, without consulting her, removed all references to this second volume. Hence the lop-sided shape of the volume here under review.

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human actions as if they were mechanical phenomena, the facts frequently become distorted in the process. Thus, for example, in her attempts to prove that loyalty among the English is more deeply rooted than among the French or Germans—which may or may not be the case, but can hardly be proved theoretically—she revives the brief career of Esmond Romilly. She says that after his expulsion from the Communist Party, when England was in danger, he joined the Canadian Air Force and died "for king and country." This is a gross over-simplification. There are others such.

Yet this book does contain a mass of facts, many almost unknown in this country and of very great interest. Knut Hamsun's last days, the trial of Tokyo Rose, the stories of Heinz and of Rössler, Otto John, the Dides-Baranès case that in her opinion finally wrecked the Fourth Republic.... And her long passage on the men of 20th July is accurate and vivid. So, too, is her diagnosis of espionage and counter-espionage run mad in the service of the Cold War, with her amusing and pertinent conclusion that perfection will have been reached when both intelligence services are processing identical material simultaneously. What is, of course, wrong is her attempt to fit all these extremely disparate men and actions into a single book or theory. It should be read—it should have been written—as an anthology.

AND THIS, IN MY OPINION, is because she misunderstands, or only half understands, what treason is. A lengthy disquisition early in the book about the legal and theological meaning and significance of loyalty oaths is interesting—particularly in so far as the German generals who lacked the civil courage to rebel against Hitler invoked their oath to the dictator as justification—but does not take us much closer to understanding what treason in fact is. When she comments on Stauffenberg's laughing remark that he was committing *Hochverrat*, high treason, and says approvingly that at last someone was telling the truth, she completely misses the point: Stauffenberg was being ironical, for had he believed that to assassinate Adolf Hitler was in fact high treason he would never have contemplated such a course. Again she implies that the fact that Sir Winston Churchill twice changed his political allegiance could, had this happened in national rather than in party-political terms, be called treason. This assumes that the party (or the nation or the ideology) remains a static entity. And the logical conclusion of this, to fall into Dr. Boveri's way of thinking, would be that all ex-

Theodore Draper

Castro's Communism

Last year we published two articles on Cuba by Theodore Draper which provoked a great deal of discussion. Mr. Draper's new article on recent developments arrived too late for inclusion in this issue, but is available to all readers as an ENCOUNTER pamphlet.

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Communists, all ex-Nazis, indeed all refugees and finally all members of a political opposition are traitors. She skirts this one to come up with its own antithesis, namely that there are in reality no traitors at all, but only idealists, well or misinformed, and psychopaths. And therefore she can discuss Helmuth von Moltke in almost the same terms, and within the same frame of reference, as Jacques Doriot. This is comparable to the equally convincing, or unconvincing, dialectic of certain extreme penal reformers who would maintain that since man is a social animal and crime is anti-social, crime is a manifestation of insanity, and further that since a madman cannot by definition be held responsible for his actions and thus cannot commit a crime, there are no criminals but only neurotics. However, there are criminals, and there are also traitors.

Like Miss Rebecca West, I hope that they are not the augury of the future. A traitor can work for his own government, if that government is itself a treasonable conspiracy; he can work for a foreign treasonable conspiracy; he can work for himself alone, in pursuit of power and wealth, though such cases are rare. Eichmann, Beria, Salan, Nunn May, Harry Dexter White, and others whom the libel laws do not allow me to mention by name, are traitors because, knowing what the values of our civilisation are at this time, they have deliberately acted against that basic and accepted morality in the interests of immorality. None of these persons was or is mad: all have committed crimes in a greater or lesser degree. That such crimes, being usually committed against so undefinable a reality as the morality of the age, are scarcely to be defined by law and, as the Nuremberg trials showed, are thus not always susceptible to legal punishment, does not make them any the less heinous. Similarly de Gaulle in 1940, Beck in 1944, Maleter in 1956, and countless others who at different times during these past fifty years have acted against their governments, did so for high and honourable motives, because they regarded their government as being a criminal conspiracy against the people whom they were supposed to represent and defend, as being in fact immoral organisations. *And because at the time there was no other way of compelling those governments to behave morally.*

That is one of the basic dilemmas of democracy. A democrat may be compelled to use highly undemocratic methods to destroy a tyranny. And the fact that this necessity has not arisen in this country for several centuries may explain, far more than any theory concerning national character or the nature of loyalty oaths, why the English, and *mutatis mutandis* the Americans, have hitherto preserved a higher standard of loyalty than the great nations of Europe. Since we are being loyal to a fundamentally moral and justified social organisation, disloyalty for us is a crime against a society which is very much ourselves, and treason is thus not only political murder but also political *felo de se.*

That Western democracy is not perfect in its operations is obvious, and disenfranchised or maltreated minorities who cannot have their wrongs righted by other means—such as the suffragettes, the Irish under the Union, Gandhi's Indians, negroes in the Deep South to-day, and the unemployed in the '30s—may in extreme circumstances use violence, and call in outside help, to make the system function more properly, but not to overthrow the system as such, for to do that is treason. And the reason for this is that, for all its shortcomings, democracy enjoys a reasonable level of political virtue and morality. Any Western man who would overthrow it anywhere, no matter what the shortcomings of the democratically elected government he lives under, is a traitor: any man who would anywhere defend or enlarge it, is not. It is, really, just as simple as that.

Constantine FitzGibbon

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FROM THE OTHER SHORE

Soviet Russian Historians,

or: the Lesson of Burdzhalov

"SOVIET HISTORIANS," one of them who fled his country once observed, "would prefer not to be harlots. It is the system that makes them so." The system which he had in mind was the pattern of Party controls which dictates the themes of historians and determines what they can and cannot do. Since the Party is the ultimate custodian and expositor of the laws of history, the pronouncements of the Party leadership are sacrosanct when it chooses to speak. All Soviet historians are expected not only to take their cue from the Party line and to apply Marxist-Leninist principles to the analysis of historical problems, but also to develop that very special dialectical dexterity by which tailoring history to changing Party requirements becomes a normal, internalised response.

It is no easy assignment. Soviet historians face the constant occupational hazard that yesterday's heroes may become to-morrow's villains, and books which meet every canon of orthodoxy when they are written may become politically unacceptable shortly after they appear. Scholars who wish to rise and prosper in the Soviet historical hierarchy must not only learn to serve the powers that be, but must also develop a keen sense of the direction of impending change and be able to gauge its limits as well as the potentialities which it unfolds. Periods of transition, such as the succession struggle after Stalin's death and the attendant confusion of the de-Stalinisation campaign, are periods of crisis for historians, too. When an uncertain trumpet blows, there will inevitably be some historians who fail to catch the tune. Once the confusion is dispelled and the song of the new masters sounds loud and clear, a period of consolidation sets in, and historians again march in step.

But it would do less than justice to the Soviet historical guild to leave the impression that all of them are simply propagandists in uniform. Soviet historians, like their colleagues elsewhere, have their professional standards or at least their professional aspirations. Given the opportunity, they prefer to work in archives and with primary rather than secondary sources. A goodly number, who have concerned themselves with themes far removed from contemporary concerns, have made contributions of substantial distinction. Others have found refuge and a species of scholarly fulfilment in editing collections of valuable documents, which on occasion lend themselves to interpretations at sharp variance with official requirements. Even among those whose major interest is recent history, where political demands are most compelling, there has been pressure in recent years for greater access to archival material, and a growing interest in foreign journals, publications, and international contacts. The appearance in 1956 in the pages of *Voprosy Istorii* (Problems of History) of a series of relatively objective and subsequently condemned articles in the highly sensitive area of Party history may at least serve to remind us that there have been, and may still be, stirrings below the surface of orthodox Soviet historiography which register a greater devotion to historical truth than the current content of Soviet historical journals might lead one to think. If, since 1957, Soviet historians appear to have accommodated themselves to the political commands which come from above, it should at least be noted that they now have access to the historical record to a degree which would have been unthinkable in the latter part of Stalin's reign.

MERLE FAINSOD *is Professor of History at Harvard University and Director of its Russian Research Centre. He is the author of many works on Soviet affairs, including* How Russia is Ruled (*O.U.P.*) *and* Smolensk under Soviet Rule (*Macmillan*).

TO SEE current Soviet historiography in perspective, one must measure it against the low estate into which history fell under Stalin. This is not to say that all Stalinist historical writing was worthless. For good policy reasons, which had nothing to do with his affection for historians but had a great deal to do with his desire to stimulate Soviet patriotism, Stalin revived the study of national history. In accordance with his wishes, the patriotic feats of the heroes whom he admired, such as Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, were frequently presented in an exaggerated and distorted light. But such competent historians as Tarle and Grekov were restored to grace, and they and their pupils produced works of enduring value, which transcended the fugitive purposes they were often designed to serve. In areas which touched Stalin's power, and most areas did, Stalin was his own historian *par excellence*. There was no room in his historical mansion for "archive rats" who might come up with discoveries which challenged his own. The plight of the Soviet historian who concerned himself with Party affairs under Stalin has been graphically portrayed in *Voprosy Istorii* (No. 3, March 1956):

> The work of many researchers and teachers in the Social Sciences amounted to popularisation of J. V. Stalin's ideas. This promoted widespread dissemination of pedantry, dogmatism, and excessive use of quotations. There appeared in science second-rate people who had no initiative, who were unable or unwilling to think for themselves, who acted only within the limits of "approved principles" and strove to camouflage their intellectual barrenness with someone else's authority.... The significance of archive materials as historical sources was subjected to doubt, and the majority of these documents proved to be inaccessible to the research worker. There was no study of sources of Party history.

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> The discovery and criticism of new sources were considered unnecessary and even reprehensible. The outstanding majority of dissertations were nothing more than compilations of quotations and miscellaneous facts and repeated each other to a considerable extent....

The thaw which set in after Stalin's death was slow to penetrate the historical field. Taught for years to follow directions and instructions, historians were careful not to venture too far. The historical journals, to be sure, reflected the downgrading of the Stalin cult, and they cautiously called for the opening of archives, wider publication of documents, and access to foreign historical literature.

But the first substantial indication that fresh winds were blowing came at a conference of readers called by the editors of *Voprosy Istorii*, which met just before the Twentieth Party Congress on January 25–28, 1956. At the conference hitherto sacred views were subjected to seemingly bold attack. Speakers were critical of the tendency to embellish the careers of traditional Russian national heroes and to conceal the fact that "Tsarism was the deadly enemy of the Russian and the international revolutionary movement." Tsarist policy towards the non-Russian nationalities was condemned as harsh and oppressive, and at least one of the speakers—A. M. Pikman—rose to the defence of Shamil, who despite the praises bestowed on him by Marx and Engels, had long been under a Stalinist ban. Exaggerated claims for Russian priorities in all fields of human endeavour were repudiated. A more respectful appraisal was made of the achievements of Western bourgeois historiography, and some merit was even attributed to the work of earlier Soviet historians such as Pokrovsky, who had previously been totally disowned. The same issue (No. 2) of *Voprosy Istorii* which reported this conference and which went to press before the Twentieth Party Congress met, provided an even more striking hint of what was to come. Buried in an unsigned review of some booklets on the Congresses and Conferences of the Party was a suggestion that historians examine the speeches at the Fifteenth and Sixteenth Party Conferences of S. V. Kossior, P. P. Postyshev, A. V. Kosarev, V. A. Chubar, and other purged or disgraced Party leaders whose names had been anathema for years.

But the main shock came at the Twentieth Party Congress. First there was the speech by Mikoyan, with its denigration of Stalin, its restoration of Party leaders such as Antonov-Ovseyenko and Kossior, who had "wrongly" been pronounced enemies of the people, and its flat declaration that "scholarly work in the history of our Party and of Soviet society is perhaps the most backward sector of our ideological work." Mikoyan enjoined the historians "... to make a genuine and profound study of the facts and events in the history of our Party in the Soviet period—including those that the Short Course deals with," to "delve properly into the archives and historical documents, and not only into the back issues of newspapers...," to present "without embellishment not only the façade but the whole many-sided life of the Soviet Fatherland." Mme. Pankratova, dean of Stalinist historians, member of the Central Committee, editor of *Voprosy Istorii* (her own textbooks were examples of all that Mikoyan condemned) piously followed in Mikoyan's footsteps and rebuked her colleagues for prettifying historical reality and portraying the historical path of the Party as a triumphal procession without difficulties. Quoting Lenin, she called on them to base their historical writing on "exact and indisputable facts" and to put an end to the suppression of unpalatable material and the concealment of mistakes made by Party organisations. And as if to give point to her remarks, Khrushchev in his secret speech at the close of the Congress opened up the whole Pandora's box of Stalin's latter-day crimes and deficiencies.

The Twentieth Party Congress pronouncements launched historians on an uncharted sea where the shoals and treacherous reefs ahead were still to be discovered. Some historians enthusiastically welcomed the Party's changed attitude towards historiography and began immediately to probe the boundaries of the new freedom. Others were more conscious of the dangers and waited cautiously for events to prescribe limits on "the forward march" of historiography.

VOPROSY ISTORII, led by its assistant editor, E. N. Burdzhalov, and with the somewhat reluctant co-operation of Mme. Pankratova, the chief editor, became the rallying point of the venturesome. In a lead editorial (No. 3, March 1956) entitled "The Twentieth Party Congress and Problems of Research in Party History," the magazine called for a new Party history which would correct "the far-fetched interpretations and outright falsifications" of the past. Addressing itself particularly to the role of the Mensheviks in the 1905 revolution, it advanced the thesis that *"the Bolsheviks were the most consistent but not the only force in the revolutionary-democratic camp."* While describing Menshevism "as a trend hostile to Marxism in the workers' movement...," it dismissed the view that Mensheviks were "the accomplices of Tsarist autocracy" and called for a study of the joint committees of Bolsheviks and Mensheviks at the end of 1905. It went on to demand *"a truthful picture"* of the situation within the Party before Lenin's return to Russia in 1917 and insisted that proper due be given to the many heroes of October whose activity had previously been *"minimised or passed over in silence."* Calling for an end of distortion in historical writing, it proclaimed: *"The task of historians is to explain and not to hush up historical facts."*

During the next months *Voprosy Istorii* pressed the attack. In the March issue (No. 3) A. M. Pikman rose to the defence of Shamil. In the April issue (No. 4) E. N. Burdzhalov published a relatively objective article on "The Tactics of the Bolsheviks in March and April, 1917," in which he demonstrated that prior to Lenin's return and the adoption of the April theses Stalin joined with Kamenev in defending the "anti-Leninist" policy of Bolshevik conditional support of the Provisional

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Government, that while Kamenev continued his opposition to Lenin at the April conference where Stalin switched sides, Zinoviev at the time opposed Kamenev and upheld the Leninist line. These and other articles in the same vein which called attention to distortions and omissions in the republication of memoirs of Old Bolsheviks and which condemned *"the gilding of historical reality"* began to arouse concern in high Party circles, a concern which was no doubt reinforced by the spreading infection of revisionism in the international Communist movement and by the ferment which Khrushchev's Secret Speech released within the Soviet Party itself. The 30 June 1956 resolution of the Party Central Committee represented a major effort to impose limits on the discussion which Khrushchev's Secret Speech had unleashed, and its reverberations were soon felt in historiography.

AN ARTICLE by Ye. Bugayev which appeared in the July 1956 issue (No. 14) of *Party Life* (a companion piece appeared in *Kommunist*, No. 10) represented an early warning that *Voprosy Istorii* was embarked on a dangerous course.

Its call for objectivity in appraising the work of bourgeois historians, Bugayev asserted, could only serve to "confuse historians and students" and lead them to forget "that peaceful co-existence of capitalism and socialism in the international arena does not at all mean an ideological reconciliation between socialist and bourgeois ideologies." Its re-evaluation of Party history, Bugayev continued, "leaves the uninitiated reader with the impression that all works on Party history published in the past fifteen or twenty years are junk." Condemning such "a nihilist attitude," he added that earlier Party histories could not begin "to compare favourably" with the *Short Course*, "even though the latter contains many errors and inaccuracies." He singled out Burdzhalov's article on "The Tactics of the Bolsheviks in March and April 1917" for special censure for its allegedly biased presentation of the position of the Central Committee Bureau at that time.

> *Voprosy Istorii* [Bugayev concluded] occupies an important place in historiography. This is all the more reason for the reader to expect thoughtful research from it. Only harm can come from clamour, cheap sensation, and haste.... Judging by the fact that at present one-sided articles do get into the journal, it cannot be said that it is correctly orienting historians on all questions of historiography.

IT IS A MEASURE of the ideological confusion which still prevailed during this period that *Voprosy Istorii* did not accept this seemingly authoritative rebuke as ending the debate.

While conceding that some of Bugayev's critical remarks were "admittedly correct" and some theses advanced in the journal "were not adequately substantiated," the editors vigorously defended a number of articles which Bugayev had attacked, including the article by Burdzhalov. The editors took the view that they were correctly carrying out the injunctions of the Twentieth Party Congress.

> Some comrades [and they made clear that they had Bugayev in mind] caution against haste in reorganising the work of historians and say that we must wait for special instructions and directives, as though the 20th Party Congress had not given them.... We have people who are afraid of every new word and who do not wish to abandon their habitual views. Ye. Bugayev writes only about what should not be done; it is not necessary to re-examine everything, it is not necessary to go to extremes, to be one-sided, etc. ... Ye. Bugayev's article in essence aims at leaving everything as it was. The author attacks opportunists who want to run with the tide. But is it possible to regard the struggle to carry out the decisions of the Twentieth Party Congress as 'running with the tide?" The Twentieth Party Congress gave a clear programme for the fruitful development of Marxist-Leninist historiography. Soviet historians will consistently and undeviatingly carry out this programme.

Evidently Burdzhalov and his fellow-editors of *Voprosy Istorii* still felt at this time that they could count on powerful Party support.

Meanwhile, the editors of *Voprosy Istorii* had been holding conferences with readers of the journal in Kiev and Leningrad. A report of the Leningrad conference which appeared in *Leningradskaya Pravda* (August 5, 1956) indicated that E. N. Burdzhalov, the assistant editor of *Voprosy Istorii*, spoke with more than the usual degree of frankness. Stating that "we historians have no one to give us basic directives and instructions," he pointed out that *Voprosy Istorii* had lifted the "ban" on the treatment of many questions which had hitherto been dealt with incorrectly. Appraising the state of Soviet historiography, he developed a theory of gradations of truthfulness, according to which the historians of the 'twenties "wrote more truthfully than the historians of the 1930s, and the latter more truthfully than the historians of the 1950s." He called for more young contributors to the journal, pointing out that while they might possess less factual knowledge, they were, on the other hand, "freer from prejudices and the tendency to conform." He expressed the view that it was necessary to do justice to the "revolutionary" spirit of Menshevism in the pre-revolutionary period and to give a more accurate portrayal of the activities of anti-Leninist groups and trends in the Party.

While his speech evoked enthusiastic support from some of the Leningrad historians, there were quick indications that Burdzhalov had gone too far. Taking his cue from the Bugayev article in *Party Life* and its companion piece in *Kommunist*, A. Alexandrov who reported on the conference in *Leningradskaya Pravda* launched a powerful attack on Burdzhalov's "new and highly dubious formulations" and, in the name of the Twentieth Party Congress, called for

> stronger ideological guidance, a strict safeguarding of the purity of Marxist theory, a vigorous struggle against remnants of bourgeois ideology, a stronger attack on the survivals of

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capitalism in the minds of the people, and exposure of those who harbour them.

DESPITE these clear warnings, Burdzhalov and his fellow-editors of *Voprosy Istorii* persisted in their course.

The August issue of *Voprosy Istorii* (No. 8, 1956) contained a reply by Burdzhalov entitled "More on the Tactics of the Bolsheviks in March and April, 1917" as well as an article by M. A. Moskalev on "The Struggle to Create a Marxist Workers' Party in the 1890s," which aroused the ire of the Party orthodox because it argued that Lenin first developed the idea of an alliance of the working class and peasantry on the basis of the experience of the 1905–07 revolution, instead of as far back as the mid-nineties, as had previously been claimed. The next issue of *Voprosy Istorii* (No. 9) included the reminiscences of an old Party member, F. I. Drabkina, on the March Conference of 1917, the effect of which was to provide further corroboration for Burdzhalov's views.

The demand for a more sophisticated view of opponents of Lenin and Marx also found reflection in the columns of *Voprosy Istorii*. The October issue (No. 10) carried a review by R. Ye. Yevzerov which criticised N. I. Krutchkhova's book, *From the History of V. I. Lenin's Struggle Against Opportunism in the International Area*, for its primitive treatment of Kautsky as a renegade and double-dealer and its failure to note Lenin's own tributes to Kautsky as an outstanding Marxist theorist in the pre-war years. In the same vein the editors pleaded for more objective appraisals of such men as Lassalle and Bakunin, and the November issue (No. 11) carried a review by E. I. Kuznetsova and B. E. Stein on "English and American Historiography of the October Revolution, Foreign Intervention and Civil War in Russia," which was notably free of the abusive rhetoric ordinarily heaped on bourgeois historians who fail to fit the "progressive" mould.

UP TO THE POLISH OCTOBER and the Hungarian revolts, Burdzhalov and his sympathisers were still able to fight a rearguard action, but now they found themselves faced with heavy artillery to which there was no reply.

Pravda entered the fray on November 20 by publishing a letter to the editor from V. Smirnov, a Moscow University docent in Party History, which sharply attacked the Moskalev article and charged that *Voprosy Istorii*, "under the guise of criticising consequences of the cult of the 'individual,'" was undertaking "to revise . . . questions that have long been decided by the Party and to cast doubt on indisputable truths." *Party Life* in its December issue (No. 23) revealed that discussions of *Voprosy Istorii's* stand had been organised "in the History Department of Moscow State University and a number of other research and educational institutions," and that "these discussions demonstrated that scholarly circles condemn the errors committed by *Voprosy Istorii*." The editors of *Party Life* expressed strong support for the position taken earlier by Ye. Bugayev and admonished *Voprosy Istorii* for "its negative evaluation of all the historical literature published during recent decades. . . ." They implied that the journal had overstepped the bounds in its appreciation of bourgeois scholarship, and reminded the editors that

> the struggle against vulgarisation must be conducted in such a way that no one receives the wrong impression that we are talking about "liberalising" our ideology or about adopting a tolerant attitude towards the ideology of the bourgeoisie. . . . It is known [the editorial continued] that some of our scholars and scientists have failed to realise that peaceful co-existence of countries with differing social and political systems does not mean ideological disarmament —on the contrary, the ideological struggle between them will not weaken but grow stronger.

This time, not only Burdzhalov and Moskalev, but the chief editor, Mme. Pankratova herself, were singled out for rebuke.

The last issue of *Voprosy Istorii* for the year 1956 (No. 12) made clear that the warning had been understood. The December issue contained an article by S. K. Bushnev on "Caucasian Muridism" in which Pikman was censured for his favourable view of Shamil and the progressive character of the incorporation of the Caucasian people in the Russian empire was reaffirmed. The same number avoided all awkward problems of Party history, though it did include an appeal by old Party members "for a truthful re-establishment of the events of the October Revolution and the Civil War." While Burdzhalov and company were now silenced and repudiated, they had still to be dislodged from their editorial posts.

THE AXE FELL with a decree of the Central Government "On the Journal *Voprosy Istorii*" dated March 7, 1957. Its provisions offer a vivid insight into the ideological preoccupations of the Party leadership at the time.

The journal was accused of glossing over differences in principle between the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks on such basic issues as the question of the hegemony of the proletariat in the revolution, of embellishing the role of the Mensheviks while minimising the leading role of the Bolsheviks in the 1905–07 revolution, and of failing to offer a principled Leninist criticism of the divisive and opportunistic tactics of the Mensheviks. It was also alleged that *Voprosy Istorii* ignored the fact that the Trotskyites and Right Opportunists transcended the framework of Soviet legality in their battle against the Party. Burdzhalov's articles were specially censured for the "objective" spirit in which they treated the activity of Zinoviev in 1917 and for seeking to demonstrate that the Bolsheviks occupied a semi-Menshevik position before Lenin's return in April 1917 and that there were powerful tendencies in the Party pushing towards united action with the Mensheviks. *Voprosy Istorii* was also accused of conciliatory attitudes towards bourgeois historians and of failing to criticise revisionist and nationalistic pronouncements, particularly as they found expression in the Yugoslav press. The journal was directed to intensify its struggle against

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bourgeois ideology and revisionism, and to dedicate itself to the Leninist principle of *partiinost* (partyness) in historical science. Burdzhalov was dismissed as assistant editor, but Mme. Pankratova was permitted to remain at her post, though attention was called to the serious mistakes which she had permitted as chief editor.

The Central Committee decree was the signal for a full-throated assault on *Voprosy Istorii* which served merely to amplify and drive home the indictment. *Kommunist* in its March 1957 issue (No. 4) reviewed the journal's errors and called for "an uncompromising struggle both against bourgeois objectivism and revisionism and against dogmatism and the consequences of the cult of the individual." *Party Life* (No. 6, March 1957) was even more outspoken. It attacked what it called the "bourgeois liberalism" of certain articles published in *Voprosy Istorii* and accused it of having blackened Soviet reality. Rising to the defence of Stalin, it declared that

> while criticising Stalin's mistakes, the Party at the same time defends him against the attacks of the revisionists and declares that it will not give up Stalin's name to [its] enemies. . . .

The March 1957 issue of *Voprosy Istorii* (No. 3) was not approved for the press until May 21 and did not appear until June. A new editorial board was listed on its masthead. Of the eleven previous editors, only three, Pankratova, N. A. Smirnov, and I. A. Khrenov remained, and Pankratova's death was announced on May 25 following "a prolonged and serious illness." The editorial leader which opened the issue reviewed and savagely attacked the "errors" of the old editorial board and staked out a new militant line for the future.

"The Soviet historian," pronounced the new editorial board, "is not a sideline observer, a clerk or a mechanical copyist of materials, a collector of information which may happen to come into his hands by chance. . . ." Repudiating bourgeois objectivism, the journal called for "genuinely scientific objectivity . . . ," which it identified with the principle of Party allegiance in the evaluation of historical phenomena. It demanded a resolute struggle aganst revisionism, an emphasis on the fundamental differences between Menshevism and Bolshevism, and treatment of J. V. Stalin "as an outstanding Marxist-Leninist who played a major role in exposing and routing the enemies of the Party and in fighting for the triumph of the Party's cause." It summoned historians to underline "the progressive significance of the unification of a number of areas of the Transcaucasus, Central Asia, and the Far East with Russia," and to emphasise "the need for constant and systematic treatment of the genuine patriotic traditions of the peoples of Russia and . . . of their historic achievements and their enormous contribution to the development of world scholarship." It promised more attention to contemporary problems of Soviet and world history in order to disclose "the world-historical significance of the Soviet Union," and "the great advantages of the socialist over the capitalist system."

This ideological manifesto, with its neo-Stalinist overtones, heralded a new period of consolidation in Soviet historiography. While the boundaries of permissible discussion were narrowed, they were at least set, and historians had their marching orders again. Since 1957 there have been at least two major reorganisations of the *Voprosy Istorii* board, the latest in 1960, but no explosion remotely comparable to the *Voprosy Istorii* scandal of 1956–57. Burdzhalov has disappeared from view, at least so far as the historical journals are concerned, and it can be presumed that historians have drawn the appropriate conclusions from the treatment accorded him.

YET IT WOULD BE a mistake to dismiss present-day Soviet historiography as merely an atavistic throw-back to the Stalinist era and to fail to recognise such improvements in the state of the art as have taken place. Soviet historians, to be sure, continue to operate within the confines of Party directives, and in some fields, such as Party history, the effect of recent changes has been largely to substitute new myths for old. But historians who are prepared to accept these limitations or who, indeed, may never even think of challenging them, have been provided with professional opportunities which were not available in earlier Stalinist days.

Recent trends in Soviet historiography make this clear. Perhaps the most important of these developments is the opening of the Archives on a greatly enlarged scale to Soviet scholars who seek to acquaint themselves directly with documentary sources. As a by-product of this lifting of the veil, the publication of documents both on the Soviet and the pre-Soviet period is by way of becoming a major Soviet historical industry. The energy which is being poured into this effort may suggest that it provides a relatively safe and congenial outlet for professional zeal. With archives open, venturesome scholars who write learned articles or monographs based on documentary sources are in a position to add a dimension of concreteness to their studies in refreshing contrast to the pallid abstractions of earlier days. There are, of course, serious hazards which persist. Subjects and periods vary in their degree of sensitivity, and there are always difficult problems in deciding which documents to publish and which to omit, what evidence to cite and what had better be ignored.

A SECOND IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT is the breakdown in the isolation of the Soviet community of historians, the widening of international contacts, and the enlarged access which Soviet scholars now have to foreign "bourgeois" as well as "progressive" literature in their special fields. This expression of confidence on the part of the régime is not without its price. Soviet scholars are expected to demonstrate their loyalty to the cause they serve by unmasking "bourgeois falsifiers of history" and by proving the superiority of the Marxist-Leninist world view. But things are not always as simple as they seem, and sometimes even the requirements of combat are honoured in the breach. The increasingly lengthy reviews of "bourgeois" historical literature which appear in the Soviet learned journals are not precisely distinguished for their

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scholarly objectivity, but their authors sometimes communicate more than the authorities might wish, and their readers find in them more than the authors intend.

There is reason to believe that some Soviet historians, at least, are not ungrateful for the stimulation derived from reading the works of the "enemy," and that they eagerly welcome the trips abroad which enable them, not merely to tilt lances, but clink glasses and even on occasion exchange ideas with their ideological foes.

OTHER DEVELOPMENTS which deserve to be noted are the expanding parameters of Soviet historiography and the proliferation of new journals which reflect these broadening concerns. In the aftermath of the *Voprosy Istorii* scandal, three new central journals were created: *Istoria SSSR*, devoted to domestic history; *Novaya i noveishaya istoria*, focusing on foreign policy and international affairs; and *Voprosy Istorii KPSS*, which as its name implies, is concerned with the Party itself. These have been supplemented by others, too numerous to list, dealing with special periods, particular sectors of life such as the military, and with the history of the national republics. The expansion of interest in Asia, Africa, and Latin America has been reflected in the establishment of new institutes, new journals, and the publication of a wide variety of specialised monographs and general histories. Books and articles on the history of the so-called people's democracies, as well as of the capitalist countries, have multiplied greatly in number. Foreign affairs have also been attracting increasing attention with the publication of numerous collections of documents, and the scheduled appearance of a new five-volume edition of "The History of Diplomacy." Also projected are an eleven-volume History of the U.S.S.R., a twelve-volume Soviet Historical Encyclopædia, a History of Russian Art, a History of Russian Culture, and a multi-volume Party History. There are extensive plans for the re-publication of the "best" works of such pre-revolutionary historians as Klyuchevsky, Solovyov, and Tatishchev. The impression conveyed is of a rash of activity, of expanding opportunities for the historical guild to engage in the practice of their craft.

IT MAY BE, as the editors of *Voprosy Istorii* have recently claimed, that Soviet historical science is at a new stage of development. Yet, as the same editors note, "Of course the scope and level of research on the history of Soviet society are not yet up to the demands of the times or the growing requirements of the Soviet reader. We have few fundamental research works on the history of Soviet society. Scholars should be bolder in tackling contemporary problems." In March 1960 the Divisions of Historical Science of the Academy of Sciences held a conference on the historiography of Socialist and Communist construction in the U.S.S.R., at which similar sentiments were voiced.

> The basic mass of our literature up to this time does not extend beyond the boundaries of the Great October Revolution, the Civil War, the revival of the national economy (1921–25), and the first Five Year Plan. The ensuing stages in the life of Soviet society are studied more weakly.

Soviet historians by their own admission are not yet in a position to cast much light on recent changes in Soviet life.

At the same time they have begun to make substantial contributions towards an understanding of some aspects of the Revolutions of 1905 and 1917 and the earlier periods of Soviet rule. Perhaps the most impressive progress has been evident in the publication of archival material. One thinks in this connection of the huge collection of documents on 1905 and 1917, on the re-publication of the protocols of the Party Central Committee meetings of 1917 and 1918, and the proceedings of the Seventh Party Conference and Sixth Party Congress of 1917, of the compilation which appeared in *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* in Nos. 2 and 3, 1958, with its great mass of detailed information on the state of local Party organisation in 1917, of the "Correspondence of the Secretariat of the Central Committee of the Russian Social-Democratic Workers' Party (Bolsheviks) with Local Party Organisations," of the "Decrees of the Soviet Régime," the collection on "Nationalisation of Industry in the U.S.S.R.," the documents on "The Agrarian Policy of the Soviet Régime," the collection "From the History of the Cheka (1917–21)," and many others.

These documents, needless to say, have to be utilised with care. Even when, as in the case of the stenographic reports of Party Congresses, the texts have not been tampered with, the annotations frequently convey a completely distorted view of events. To read the biographic material on Trotsky, Zinoviev, Kamenev, and Bukharin which is appended to the recent (1958) re-published Protocols of the Sixth Party Congress is to sense the distance which Khrushchev's court historians have still to travel before they make contact with the truth. Documents, of course, can be and have been bowdlerised, and inconvenient ones are excluded from public view. But with all these caveats, we must remain grateful for such archival materials as Soviet historians have been permitted to release. Not the least of the reasons is that they occasionally tell a story that not even the most ingenious omissions or annotations can conceal.

Less useful than the documents, but still not without real value, is the increasing flow of articles and monographs based on archival research. A goodly number dealing with the pre-Soviet period make use of much fresh material, and though the interpretations tend to follow Marxist-Leninist stereotypes, interesting questions are sometimes raised. Even in the sensitive area of the precursors of Bolshevism, some substantial work has been accomplished, and, though one of the best of the monographs: Z. Polevoy's *Origins of Marxism in Russia between 1883 and 1894* (published in 1959), was attacked by *Pravda* for its "objectivist spirit" and its "departures from the Leninist principle of *Partiinost*," it received respectful reviews elsewhere and apparently remains on sale.

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THE monographs and articles dealing with the Soviet period present a more difficult problem. Some of them provide a wealth of factual data, but they are carefully selected and winnowed, and the omissions are at least as significant as the new material which they make available. Within the limits of this article it is impossible to provide a comprehensive review of all of them, and a few examples will have to suffice.

Istoria SSSR (No. 6, 1958) contains an article by V. K. Medvedev entitled "The Liquidation of the Kulaks in the Lower Volga Territory." Its general thesis is a familiar one. It was necessary to liquidate the Kulaks as a class because they sabotaged the grain collection campaigns and stood in the way of collectivisation. The decision to liquidate the Kulaks enjoyed the overwhelming support of the poor and middle peasants, as well as the landless labourers. Once the Kulaks had been eliminated, the *kolkoz* movement was launched on a triumphant course.

The value of the article, of course, does not lie in the reiteration of these well-worn and dubious propositions, but in the rich detail which it provides on the actual measures taken to rid the territory of its Kulak element. It distinguishes at least two phases in the campaign against the Kulaks: first, the measures taken against Kulaks who opposed the grain collection campaign, and, second, the full-scale attack on the Kulaks which followed Stalin's call at the beginning of 1930 to liquidate the Kulak as a class. In the first phase of the campaign, the severity of which has sometimes been overlooked, the author cites data in the archives indicating that 3,100 Kulaks were exiled in one district alone, and that the organ of the GPU "uncovered" and "liquidated" 32 counter-revolutionary organisations and 191 Kulak groups with about 3,000 participants in the territory as a whole.

The second phase of the campaign is described in detail, including its organisation, arrangements for registering Kulak property, and the classification of Kulaks into four groups according to the degree of danger which they presented to the Soviet régime. The most dangerous were "isolated" and dispatched to *"Konts lagers"*; the harsh phrase, concentration camp, is used without euphemism or softening. The second group was exiled "to the northern *raions*, Siberia, and Kazakstan." The third category was divested of its land and transferred to less favourable parts of the territory, while the fourth group was permitted to remain in place. Again figures are cited for each category, though they are not complete. As if aware that all this might leave a bad taste, the author adds one touch to remind the reader that the Soviet government was humane. It seems that all the wagons in which Kulaks were sent into exile "had heat." The author even goes on to admit that there were "excesses," that middle peasants were wrongly classified as Kulaks because they opposed collectivisation, but he also asserts that such actions were in no sense typical, and that most of the "excesses" were corrected.

AS ONE WHO HAS WORKED through similar material in the Smolensk archive, I think I can testify that there is much in this article which is recognisably authentic. But even more striking are its omissions and the way in which material has been arranged to fit a preconceived scheme. One looks in vain for citations to the wealth of GPU reports which testify to the massive opposition which collectivisation evoked, and one marvels at the capacity of the author to twist the facts which he does use to the purposes which he serves.

There remains only the melancholy reflection that, having dipped into the Archives, our author may not be unconscious of what he has left out.

LET ME TURN to a second example, an article by F. M. Vaganov on "The Rout of the Right Deviation in the VKP(b) (1928–1930)," which appeared in *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* (No. 4, 1960).

The article holds out special interest because the activities of the Right Wing Opposition, in contrast to the Left, have been poorly documented, and the author, as his citations reveal, has been able to draw on the Central Party Archive. Again, as one might expect, the basic political line of the article follows a well-worn groove. The article begins and ends with citations from Khrushchev condemning the Right Wingers and elaborates the usual indictment that they broke with Leninism, threatened the unity of the Party, hindered industrialisation, and sympathised with the Kulaks. But scattered through the article are documentary citations which throw some fresh light on the Party history of the period. There is an intriguing reference to the purge of *Pravda* in late 1928 which resulted in the ousting of Bukharin and his chief supporters and their replacement by E. M. Yaroslavsky and M. A. Savelyov as Stalin's representatives on the editorial board. There is an extended discussion of the struggle for the control of the Moscow Party organisation, where Uglanov, the first secretary and a number of his *raikom* secretaries, threw in their lot with the Right. The author goes out of his way to demonstrate, with quotations from speeches, that both Voroshilov and Kalinin, who have often been alleged to have sympathised with the Right Wingers, actually gave strong support to Stalin at the April 1929 plenum of the Central Committee and Central Control Commission. Mr. Vaganov's version is, of course, far from being the whole story, but the titbits which he throws out help to round out the tale.

Similar articles could be cited by the dozen. What distinguishes them all is a basic orthodoxy of line combined with more richly elaborated detail and the appearance, at least, of a scholarly apparatus. Yet it should also be pointed out that the impact of this research has yet to be felt at the textbook level. Even the most recent elementary histories of the Soviet period retain a schematic and stereotyped quality which rarely goes beyond summaries of statistics of progress and of the contents of important Government and Party decrees.

THERE REMAINS to be considered how those charged by the Party with responsibility for work on the historical front appraise the current state of Soviet historiography. One catches in the journals from time to time warnings that history must not be allowed to degenerate into "factology,"

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and that the propagation of Marxism-Leninism must take precedence over the professional preoccupation with fact-finding. The January 9, 1960, decree of the Party Central Committee "On the Tasks of Party Propaganda in Present-Day Conditions" is even more explicit:

> The Party Central Committee, while noting the great importance and positive role of the social sciences and their personnel in working out and popularising Marxist-Leninist theory and in the ideological education of the Soviet people, at the same time considers that many shortcomings in the content of Party propaganda are due to a certain lag of workers in the social sciences behind the practice of Communist construction and the tasks of ideological work. Many economists, philosophers, historians, and other scholarly personnel have not overcome elements of dogmatism, do not have a bold and creative approach to life and to the experience of the masses' struggle, are poorly elaborating timely theoretical and practical questions and are often held in the toils of outdated and fruitless problems.

Again, as so often before, historians are called upon to abandon their flight from the contemporary and to address themselves to present-day problems.

The response of historians to such calls has thus far been wary. Historians everywhere, by the nature of their profession, feel a primary obligation to illuminate the past, and in the Soviet Union in particular, the history of the Soviet period has always presented very special political hazards. Since Stalin's death, these hazards, in a sheer physical sense, have declined substantially, but, as the *Voprosy Istorii* scandal made only too clear, the re-interpretation of the recent past is strewn with hidden land-mines, and the unwary and adventurous may easily fall afoul of them. The large-scale opening of the Archives since 1956 has made work in the Soviet period more professionally attractive, but one measure of the caution which such work inspires is the very considerable concentration of energy on the publication of documents. The monographs and articles which have appeared since 1956 make use of archival material on a much larger scale than previously, but the material itself is fitted into a political pattern dictated by the current needs of the Party leadership.

The Twenty-second Party Congress with its dramatic documentation of Stalin's crimes and of the involvement of Molotov, Malenkov, Kaganovich, and Voroshilov in them provides new marching orders for the historians. They are now free to do justice to such victims of Stalin's purges as were freshly rehabilitated at the Congress. But they must still steer warily in dealing with such historically important personages as Trotsky, Kamenev, Zinoviev, Bukharin, Tomsky, Rykov, and other leading members of the Left and Right Wing opposition of the 'twenties, who were *not* rehabilitated at the Congress. They will, of course, be required to ignore completely the role which Khrushchev, Mikoyan, Shvernik, Kuusinen, and other members of the present Party leadership played in the Great Purge, except perhaps to intimate that they were powerless to oppose "excesses" of which they disapproved. The historians will be encouraged to compensate for these omissions by centring their fire on Stalin and the anti-Party group, and, if the archives of the KGB are even partially opened to them, they will have a gruesome, if still incomplete, tale to tell. But one prediction can be safely made. With memories of what happened to Burdzhalov and *Voprosy Istorii* after the Twentieth Congress still fresh, there are unlikely to be many among them who will interpret the new upsurge of de-Stalinisation at the Congress as a signal for the indulgence of that kind of free-ranging curiosity which could lead to a thoroughgoing and objective reconstruction of the history of the Soviet period.

WHAT OF THE HISTORIANS THEMSELVES as they strive to reconcile Party requirements to fictionalise the past and engage in myth-making with the professional need to write history as it happened, no matter what the price?

On this we can only speculate and perhaps raise a few questions. For some Soviet historians, the thoroughly indoctrinated and the fanatically committed, the dilemma stated may well be unreal. For many of them the Party truth is the highest truth, and the task as they conceive it is to impose a vision of the future on the imperfections of the past and present. Other Soviet historians may well find the problem more complex, but not insoluble. The capacity of the human mind to sustain contradictions and live with paradoxes should never be underestimated, all the more when one lives in a society which offers no ready alternative. Yet for those who believe that the desire to know and tell the truth is deeply imbedded in the human consciousness, there is comfort to be derived from what happened in *Voprosy Istorii* in 1956 when the bonds were loosened.

It would be easy to dismiss the significance of the Burdzhalov incident by pointing out that Burdzhalov's record under Stalin could not be distinguished from that of any other Party hack, and that his "bravery" in 1956 consisted in doing exactly what was expected of him. It is not so easy to explain why he and others persisted in their course after authoritative Party disapproval had been sharply expressed. Even if one posits the existence of some highly-placed protector who provided encouragement, the fact remains that the decision was a risky one, as the subsequent repudiation of Burdzhalov made only too clear.

SINCE 1957 THE BURDZHALOVS and their ilk have been driven underground or have made their compromises with necessity. But one cannot help wondering whether they will not rise again from among the new generation of "archive rats" and from those exposed to the infections of foreign bourgeois and even pre-revolutionary non-Marxist historians. Or have Soviet historians become so thoroughly conditioned by their time and place that they will henceforth find only what they are taught to believe and no longer believe what they find?

Merle Fainsod

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LETTERS

Rimbaud

WE COULD NOT read without amazement and indignation, in the November issue of ENCOUNTER, what is announced on the front page as POEMS FROM RIMBAUD and inside as POEMS BY RIMBAUD, Robert Lowell being apparently their . . . translator.

This collection of blunders, elementary misconstructions, mistakes of all kinds—this insane slaughter of rhythms, images, and meanings, is past criticism. It is neither translation, nor interpretation, nor even a "version" inspired at least by the text. It looks rather like a ludicrously bad deciphering, based on a very poor knowledge of the French language. Here are only a very few of the mistakes, picked at random in *The poet at seven* (page 6 of your issue):

L'âme de son enfant livrée aux répugnances

becomes:

With turmoil, his soul returned to its vomit

meaning exactly the reverse of the French verse.

Sous des habits puant la foire et tout vieillots

is rendered by:

Under rags stuck with diarrhœa

Really awful! From the two meanings of *foire*, Robert Lowell has chosen the wrong one: *"flux de ventre"* (says Littré), the other being, of course: *"fête populaire, kermesse."*

Further on, we find:

. . . life in the Sahara
where ravished Liberty had fled

for:

. . . la vie
Du grand désert, où luit la Liberté ravie

luit having been flatly read as *fuit, le grand désert*, on the other hand, being identified as *the Sahara*, which makes rather surprising the apparition of *buffaloes* in the next line (a gift from the Boston zoo!).

Then we have *illustrated weeklies, rotogravures of naked, red Hawaiian girls dancing*, for:

. . . journaux illustrés où, rouge, il regardait
Des Espagnoles rire et des Italiennes,

—a transposition simply idiotic.

Further on, we come on:

a Bible pocked with cabbage-green mould

for:

une Bible à la tranche vert-chou.

Madame Rimbaud's *green-edge* Bible pocked with mould! . . .

And *The poet at seven* is not the worst piece in this strange selection from Rimbaud. *The drunken boat* keeps next to nothing from the original *Bateau ivre*. Reduced without warning from 25 stanzas to 15, there is not one image which is not distorted, grotesquely misunderstood. For instance:

Et les péninsules démarrées
N'ont pas subi tohu-bohu plus triomphant

becomes:

These floating river-villages
Had never heard a more triumphant shout.

Any reader, even with a moderate knowledge of French, will realise, if he cares to compare Mr. Lowell's production with the original, what a havoc Mr. Lowell has made, going through Rimbaud like one of his Saharan buffaloes. It seems to us most puzzling that ENCOUNTER felt no objection to publishing this hopeless trash.

DOMINIQUE AURY, PIERRE LEYRIS,
HENRI THOMAS

Paris

I WANT to offer Aury, Leyris, and Thomas two answers. The first has to do with Rimbaud's literal meaning, the second with my attempt to turn his French poems into English poems.

I know perfectly well what Rimbaud means. Exact prose translations are very useful. There should be accurate scholarly editions of the great modern European poets with literal translations and footnotes. Such editions would replace the innumerable slap-dash free renderings which are neither informative nor good poetry on their own.

This isn't what I was trying to do. Robert Frost says that poetry can't be translated. To make something that is poetry in another language into something that is poetry in one's own language is impossible unless one is a poet. My method is nothing new; the example I had in mind when I was working on Rimbaud was Sir Thomas Wyatt's versions of Petrarch. Whether I have succeeded or not cannot be demonstrated by line by line comparisons. In my "buffalo" passage I was trying to build up a melange of exotic places, not just one place. In my "cabbage-green mould" I was trying to give a sordid, rather Dickensian setting. I object to Aury, Leyris, and Thomas's hysterical foaming. Their ability to judge English poetry is probably on a par with my French scholarship. Their letter has about as little to do with my intentions as the notes of a Brazilian geographer would have had to Rimbaud's.

ROBERT LOWELL

New York City

Ilya Ehrenburg

I HOLD no brief for Ilya Ehrenburg and do not wish to deny the obvious fact that he licked Stalin's boots for many years. However, Mr. Fyvel is simply wrong on a number of points, no doubt with the best intentions. Taking these points in the order in which he made them [ENCOUNTER, December]:

1. Mr. Fyvel reproaches Ehrenburg with omitting Bukharin's name from his autobiography, in

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the context of juvenile revolutionary activity. But this is not so, he does mention him in his autobiography, and in just this context (see *Novy Mir*, August 1960, page 43).

2. Mr. Fyvel makes Ehrenburg's "legal" departure from Russia in 1921 appear sinister, the more so as he left with his wife at a time when, so Mr. Fyvel alleges, wives were kept behind as hostages. This only shows that he is quite unacquainted with the situation at this period. Quite a few unreliable intellectuals were allowed out in these early years. Even some dissident politicians, notably Mensheviks, were given facilities to leave legally, with their wives. I particularly remember this because my parents were among them, accompanied by a child, me. Mr. Fyvel has projected the Stalin terror atmosphere back to 1921, and so puts Ehrenburg's journey in the wrong connotation. Incidentally, why on earth does he doubt Ehrenburg's story about the way he was treated by the French police when he arrived there? True, the French were accustomed to Russian refugees, but these did not, like Ehrenburg, carry a Soviet passport!

3. Mr. Fyvel is obviously unaware of the fact that Ehrenburg's failure to publish anything anti-Nazi when he returned to Russia after the fall of Paris was bitterly criticised—*by Ehrenburg himself*, in a recent number of *Ogonyok*. He attacked the censorship for cutting out all his (and others') anti-Fascist statements in 1940–41. This could well have been the case. In judging what a man writes, and, more important, does not write, the fact of censorship should not be overlooked, surely.

4. Mr. Fyvel reproaches him with not writing about Babel's fate until 1961. He must be unaware of the fact that the first collection of Babel's works published after Stalin's death, I think in 1956, contained a preface by Ehrenburg which praised his work and clearly said what his fate had been.

I would also have thought that even an ex-bootlicker is entitled to more credit than Mr. Fyvel has given him for his efforts since 1953 to enlarge the area of literary freedom in Russia.

A. Nove

London School of Economics

Mr. Nove is correct in one of his instances of criticism and misleading elsewhere:

(a) True, the reference to Bukharin is there.

(b) Mr. Nove is being needlessly naïve. I also know, since this includes personal acquaintances, that other people in 1921 also got out of the Soviet Union on Soviet passports, as Mr. Nove's parents did. However, my reference was to Ehrenburg's unique ability to travel in and out of the Soviet Union on such a passport for twenty years, purges and all. I take it that Mr. Nove does not suggest that his parents did so, so that the rest of his reminiscences and surmises are beside the point.

(c) If Mr. Nove will look again, he will see that I referred not to what Ehrenburg wrote after his return to Russia from Paris, but to his despatches *from* Paris. I was aware of Ehrenburg's retrospective attempt to justify these as well, but, alas, here the explanation is least convincing. After all, Ehrenburg wrote these articles soft-pedalling the Nazi occupation of France not under compulsion in a Moscow office, but from outside, from the West, when presumably other choices were still open to him. But to make my purpose quite plain to Mr. Nove, this was not to attack Ehrenburg—I have no doubt that he was always a consciously Jewish writer—but to illuminate the tragic and paradoxical plight in which Stalinism had placed him.

(d) Mr. Nove builds up an artificial point of syntax. I mentioned Babel because the actual quotation from Ehrenburg linked him with Markish, but the preceding paragraphs made it perfectly clear that I was not discussing Babel or anyone else purged in 1938, but Ehrenburg's enforced silence about Stalin's arrests of Markish and other Jewish writers many years later, after the war.

As for Mr. Nove's concluding paragraph, I agree that in talking about a writer caught behind the Iron Curtain one should lean backwards in his favour. I think I did so. Mr. Nove, while calling Ehrenburg an "ex-bootlicker"—his utterly inappropriate epithet, not mine—wants to lean still further. That is a matter of inclination.

T. R. Fyvel

London

"Egad"

If only to give credit where credit is seldom given, may I be permitted to point out Professor Arnold Toynbee's erroneous ascription to Tennyson, in the January Encounter (p. 8), of the celebrated remark, "By God, you had better!", to the lady who told him that she accepted the Universe? Although there are several versions of this incident, all agree that the lady was Margaret Fuller and that the remark, cast in somewhat politer form (*"Gad, madam, you'd better!"* or *"Egad, you'd better!"*), was made by Thomas Carlyle.

Carlisle Moore

London

Book Trade

Mr. MacInnes's "Wild Glance . . ." deserves more than the answers to specific details, which he rightly admits could be made. . . . To move the matter into a new context, it is necessary to see that the key to the future is, or can be, in the public libraries. These are already the major factor in the publication of new novels (see Alan White's memo. to the Society of Authors, showing that public library purchases are the guarantors of first novels selling about 3,000 copies). And if their present £5,000,000 per annum were doubled, trebled, and quadrupled . . . the effects on the trade would be far more revolutionary than MacInnes's gimmicks. Moreover, they could, if the legislation proposed in the Roberts Report of 1959 were put

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through, guarantee not only a market and an expanding one at that, but continued and extending freedom of expression for writers.

JOHN GILLARD WATSON

Oxford

I LIKE Colin MacInnes's built-in title disclaimer. But his article [ENCOUNTER, January] is worse than wild: it is woolly, weird, and whacky. And gloriously off-beam. Does he equate Cecil Gee with Bumpus, Marks & Spencers with High Hill, or Doug Dobell with any of the superb new bookshops that appeared in 1961? No; nor, on the other hand, does he remember the thousands of drab draperies, tatty men's-wear shops, and second-rate Disc Dive-ins that still make up the majority of retail outlets in those three lines. On top of all this, when you give him a "chain bookshop" that is as alive, as smart, and as contemporary as any branch of M. & S., he complains that they sell other things as well as books, leaving me to wonder what pure cultural motive underlies the drapery stores' merchandising.

Having started with this superb piece of illogical reasoning, MacInnes plunges deeper. Everyone will buy paperbacks up to 6s., he cries, and everyone could be persuaded to buy bound books at three or four times that price. Come again, Mr. MacInnes! I have a small, non-drab, non-dull, definitely cultural (whatever that means) bookshop. It is stocked with a lot of enthusiasm, three people who believe that books can and must be sold and a modest display of the new and the enduring. For a year we stared at a bound copy of *World Events* published by Longmans at 10s. but failed to sell it, although every school library should have taken it. Then it came out in Penguins. The price remained the same; only the binding changed. We sold six copies.

Paperbacks sell widely because their synonym is "cheap." The egghead variety are cheerfully bought at prices ranging from 8s. 6d. to £1 by people who would never buy a bound book at 15s. My shop has a record department. We don't just tolerate teenagers, we like them; and are pleased that among them are about a dozen who have been barred from a number of other record shops in the neighbourhood. We'll spend as much time on looking up the backing of an old Presley hit or the flip side of Helen Shapiro's first record as we will in tracing an obscure tome for a local headmaster. But when it comes to books, the most they will ever *look at* are paperback horror stories, war books (declining), and sundry sensational titles like *Lady C.* and *Lolita*. And this remains true even if they have to spend half-an-hour in a shop half-full of bound books waiting to get into the record cubicle.

Having brought off a superb *non sequitur* in assuming that the marketing technique for paperbacks could easily be expanded to bound books, Colin MacInnes goes chasing after another—the sleeve and the jacket. By implication he compares the best record-sleeves with the poorest book-jackets. But while there are dust-jackets as eye-catching as some of the sleeves for John Coltrane or Thelonious Monk, are there really dust-jackets as pompously dull as those for Klemperer's Beethoven series, or as appallingly drawn, designed, and coloured as the *Salad Days* L.P.? Marek Zulawski's jacket for my last novel has won spontaneous praise from many of the teenagers who use our shop, but the nearest any of them have come to buying it is a promise to put their name down at the Public Library.

WHEN WE COME TO MacInnes's statements on Public Libraries, all is pure fantasy. Of course the bookshop has to face impossible competition: few people would buy a theatre ticket or an L.P. or even a Jaguar if they could always borrow one for free. But Public Libraries were founded in an age of hope and belief, belief that the spread of literary education was one of the most important targets in social progress. It is possible that the time will come when they can no longer be justified except as *reference* libraries, when everyone can indeed afford to buy the book they want to read as well as the disc they want to hear. But that time is not yet here. As T. R. Fyvel points out in *The Insecure Offenders*, the working-class teenagers have the money; the grammar school, technical college, and university students are hard put to pay for visits to *espresso* bars, let alone buy books.

A hat is a hat is a hat and nearly all beer tastes —well, like beer. But the *New English Bible*, *Five Go To Demon's Rock*, and *England, Half English* really cannot be covered by the same advertising umbrella. Like Colin MacInnes, I do believe that we ought at least to try a national advertising campaign for books ("Make it a book this present," etc., etc.), but we can never hope to make the sort of appeal that hats, beer, or milk have achieved. Besides, even in the world of pop music, nearly 80 per cent of the trade is in the hands of two firms. There are hundreds of publishers. W. A. R. Collins, André Deutsch, and George Weidenfeld are not necessarily more individualistic than Sir Edward Lewis and Sir Joseph Lockwood. There are just so many more of them.

Colin MacInnes, like many another brilliant essayist, has become storm-tossed on his own sea of words. But floating among them are ideas that are neither wild nor weird. Books *should* be advertised nationally; any angle, including the fashionable, being used. The few remaining dull bookshops should be brightened, though it must not be forgotten that the teenagers are not the only retail market. We ourselves have dozens of customers in the 25–50 age bracket who want a less brash selling approach—and shop. A. P. Herbert's scheme (or a similar one) should be adopted at the earliest possible date. And book prices should be raised to a level at which the publisher gave a discount that allowed the bookseller to employ top-grade assistants and attractive premises.

Emerging from Mr. MacInnes's dowsing, I began to wonder whether, after all, the man was *hip* or, to quote Norman Mailer, just "listening to the sound of his own voice and taking the meaning from there." For C. S. Lewis (in *An Experiment in Criticism*) comes—I'm afraid—nearer the truth.

The majority do not set much store by reading. They turn to it as a last recourse. They

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Life & Letters To-day (II)

Berlin

THE *performance of* Fidelio *at the East Berlin State Opera led to a spontaneous demonstration last night. The chorus of the prisoners, "Oh what joy to breathe free air . . ." aroused tremendous applause by the East German audience. The applause was even greater when in the second act Florestan started his aria: "I spoke the truth openly and chains were my reward. . . ." The orchestra had to interrupt the music and start again.* THE TIMES

London

BEFORE *I became a librarian I had a vision of myself ushering awed and humble visitors into the treasure-chamber. My only excuse is that I was very young and my vision at least was not ignoble. It was a little girl of seven who finally shattered it. She asked me for a book for Mummy and a book for Daddy. Wearily I said to her. "A thriller for Daddy?" She nodded. "And a love-story for Mummy?" She looked up at me contemptuously. "No," she said, "she's married."* THE LISTENER

Elisabethville

ONE *element of the Elisabethville fighting is the closeness between battle and quiet. Victor Hugo wrote of a battle scene that in the street you could hear the crack of gunfire while in a café a block away you could hear the crack of billiard balls on a pool table. Here it is the same.* N.Y. HERALD-TRIBUNE

Moscow

THE *Soviet press and radio and television broadcasts described the United States as convulsed by an anti-Communist campaign in which "Washington inquisitors" and "witch-hunters" were stalking the liberal elements. As an example of hysteria, a letter was reprinted from a Miami newspaper protesting the staging of Chekhov's* The Cherry Orchard *at Miami University.* NEW YORK TIMES

Manchester

MR. *Khrushchev, after all, really is a revisionist; in theory as well as in practice he has systematically dismantled a large part of Stalin's legacy. It would be surprising if his innovations had not disturbed at least some of those who used to regard Stalin as the fount of truth. Even in the Soviet Union there are pockets of disgruntled Stalinists who appear to regard Mr. Khrushchev as the Crosland of world communism.* THE GUARDIAN

Freetown

THE *Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh this morning landed in "ancient and loyal" Sierra Leone. With handsome men in long flowing robes and sequined caps, with beautiful women in turbans as light as air and winged like birds, with countless, tiny, half-naked scampering children who play and shriek by the roadside, with solemn schoolboys who look as if they had come from a cathedral school, the town has a gaily, improbably, wholly beguiling Ronald Firbank air about it.* THE OBSERVER

Berlin

VERDI'S La Traviata *has been banned in East Berlin. Communist censorship apparently takes exception to the final-curtain aria:* "Parigi, o cara, noi lasceremo"*—meaning "Let us flee these walls, my dear."* N.Y. HERALD-TRIBUNE

London

ALTHOUGH *Bertrand Russell was sent to gaol for demonstrating in Trafalgar Square, he was heartened by the Inland Revenue's agreeing to regard the expense he incurred in the demonstration as a legitimate business expense, since it stimulated the sale of his books.*

SUNDAY TIMES

Washington

"IF THAT'S *literature, I'll eat it," said Leonard T. Kardy, the well-known literary epicure and, in his spare time, State's Attorney for Montgomery County. Mr. Kardy's prospective repast was that controversial novel of Henry Miller's,* Tropic of Cancer. *He was summing up his case against a Bethesda book-dealer who sold the novel, was convicted on Tuesday of violating Maryland's obscenity law, and was sentenced by Judge James H. Pugh to six months in the State House of Correction. Mr. Kardy went on to demonstrate his firm independence of taste by adding: "I don't care what the authors say." He persuaded Judge Pugh to forbid testimony as to whether the book is pornography or has literary merit by several authors brought into court as expert witnesses.* WASHINGTON POST

Tel Aviv

THE "ODE TO JOY" *was sung in English here to-night to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Israel Philharmonic Orchestra. An earlier decision to present the vocal parts of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony in Schiller's original German was reversed in consideration of the mood in the country after the death sentence passed on Adolf Eichmann.*

NEW YORK TIMES

Washington

THE *English language made a come-back this year. The President of the United States, for the first time in eight years, was heard to arrange a subject, verb, and object in proper order in a single sentence.* NEW YORK TIMES

Aden

THE IMAM *of Yemen's 64-line poem has upset President Nasser. In it the Imam gave advice to Arab leaders to refrain from recrimination and show a united front "at these difficult times." The poem called on Arab leaders to rid themselves of confusion "resulting from foreign ideologies designed to distract us from the right path of the Prophet Mohammed, the greatest ideologist of all times."* DAILY MAIL

Los Angeles

MEMBERS *of a local school board are considering a move to ban all Tarzan books from juvenile libraries because of a complaint that Tarzan and Jane were unmarried when they lived in their tree-house.* THE GUARDIAN

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abandon it with alacrity as soon as any alternative pastime turns up. It is kept for railway journeys, illnesses, odd moments of reinforced solitude, or for the process called "reading oneself to sleep."

MARTYN GOFF

The Ibis,
Banstead, Surrey

As A bookseller and publisher (I am manageress of The Economists' Bookshop and a director of Gerald Duckworth, Ltd.), I venture to suggest that there can hardly be any other trade or profession about which so much uninformed nonsense has been said as the book trade.

G. KVERGIC

London

Regina v. *Penguin*

AT THE CRUX of John Sparrow's argument, the legalistic precision with which he has developed his case, step by step, taking nothing for granted, all of a sudden evaporates. He speaks of "the detailed descriptions of sexual intercourse that fill so many" of *Lady Chatterley*'s pages, then goes on to assert the "remarkable fact that, at a climax of the book," Lawrence becomes "covert and oblique instead of being open and direct . . . relying on clues and suggestions instead of describing in plain and forthright language (as he does elsewhere in the book) what actually happened."

It might be supposed from all this that elsewhere in the book Lawrence gives the sort of richly detailed physical descriptions of sexual performances found in the erotic writings of, say, Cleland or Sade or Apollinaire or Miller. The fact is that Lawrence nowhere speaks "in plain and forthright language" of the physiology and technology of sex. The "detailed descriptions" he gives are always of emotions and feelings. In the passage under discussion the method and style are no different from what they are in the other comparable passages. It is therefore absurd to charge Lawrence with having "lost his nerve."

DAVID SYLVESTER

London

POOR OLD Lawrence. Phoenix had risen from yet another conflagration: now he seems to be disintegrating in the ashes of one fire more. Poor Lawrentians also. No one has a good word for them. Last year the Lady C. affair had been raked up again. It was discovered, to the surprise of many, that Lady C. complete, long published in America, had not yet been printed in England. The arguments of 1928 had to be re-hashed in terms of 1961; and then the whole thing seemed to be most satisfactorily and rather unexpectedly concluded in a famous victory for Lawrence at the hands of an enlightened jury. And now here we go again. Eminent don, after weeks of reading between the lines, wants to reveal, as a public duty, that in one of the passages in which Lawrence describes coition, he can be shown beyond reasonable doubt to be advocating "unnatural practices." As Dame Rebecca West said, waiting for two hours in the draughty hall of the Old Bailey before she was called to give evidence at the Chatterley trial, "How *could* Lawrence do these things to us, and how like him."

During a long series of sexual acts performed between two people in position C, one, says Mr. Sparrow dogmatically, was performed in position B. Never having been capable myself, I must wistfully admit, of any sexual performance outside the most conventional routes, I have to acknowledge that I was never very clear about the passage in question but took it for granted that Lawrence was describing an act much simpler and less acrobatic.

Indeed this essay can't be ignored. The fact that the accusation "has nothing to do with literary merit"—official issue of the Chatterley case—is not sufficient reason to dismiss it. Mr. Sparrow is himself a lawyer—or was till he became Warden of All Souls, a position so exalted in the world of universities and education that we feel here is a voice surely above the battle, whose judgments will be unprejudiced. And indeed he starts with a demonstration of fair thinking towards Lawrence himself. His praise of Lawrence is well-worded, even eloquent. "As a writer and proponent of sexual reform" he calls him "beyond question important." Lawrence's description of the sexual act and the sensations which accompany it "contain remarkable *tours de force* of imagination and poetical writing." L.'s concern with sex "was the reverse of prurient or pornographic." Nor does Sparrow want to discuss whether or not any of these sexual acts "are morally wrong." The answers to these questions are irrelevant. Why then write at all? He gives us the answer. "A liking for honesty," he says, "and a loathing of humbug."

However, no one is perfect, and from time to time in this article certain wisps of prejudice are discernible. "It is not my purpose to criticise the trial," says the writer, and then he goes for it. We find later on that it is his opinion that Crown and Defence between them so bungled the case that a re-trial could reasonably be called for, this time perhaps with a different result. First he goes for the witnesses. Their crimes were more in the nature of failures of character and upbringing. They put themselves forward as experts, he says. Not quite true. In every case, witnesses were in fact invited, long before they knew that the date of the trial was imminent. Then Mr. Sparrow

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calls them "experts" in quotes because he questions their "expert" validity, citing as evidence the fact that one of the younger women "failed to get a First in English." (Delightfully donnish valuation—Lawrence would have loved it.) They were guilty, Mr. Sparrow said, not of hypocrisy but humbug... "much of their evidence is irrelevant and pathetic." Didn't any single one of them show a certain amount of courage, and an unusual ability to be coherent under circumstances of nightmare difficulty? Even taken out of context and in the cold light of Mr. Sparrow's print—an ordeal for which spoken evidence was never intended—where is the humbug? In one passage only—when Mr. Sparrow, and not the witnesses, equates their use of the words "pure" and "sacred" not as they intended with the fundamental puritanism of Lawrence, but with that totally opposed ethic of spirituality and uplift, which (as Sparrow rightly says) aroused Lawrence's ire so effectively.

These inaccuracies are important in our examination of Mr. Sparrow's main thesis, because they suggest that he is an advocate of this kind—that he states an opinion as if it were a fact, and, on this Particular, bases sometimes irrelevant Generalisation. He guesses that Lady C. has sold a lot of copies and puts this in such a way as to suggest that Sir Allen Lane owes his success as a publisher to the banned books department. He implies that Mr. Gerald Gardiner is indifferent to, and may even by suppression of facts distort, the facts of a case because his one aim is to satisfy the man who pays his fee. Lady C. is imperfect as a work of art, he says. True, but this opinion is used as a hint to discredit the Defence's plea of literary merit, although everybody knows that Lawrence was one of those geniuses who never produced a perfect work of art in his life.

So to the main theme. Here the trick of generalising from the particular instance is hidden behind a painstaking anatomical enquiry, in which fore and aft are carefully differentiated, with Cellini quoted in the original Italian. But right at the start of his enquiry Mr. Sparrow slips into his generalisation. "Lawrence weaves into his story not merely a defence but a panegyric of this practice... a necessary element in full sexual relationship." Oh, that generalisation! It is the basic error of criticism to confuse the author with his characters. To say, as this article does in effect, that Lawrence "is" Mellors, and does what he does, is almost ludicrously false, to those who know Lawrence and his work. Mellors and his actions are the creations of Lawrence's imagination. With this character, with this man and woman, in this situation, the whole gamut of sex was run, and this includes the experience of pure sensuality. For them "this too must be accepted.... The shame must be taken away from this too."

Poor Lawrence. Whether or not Mr. Sparrow is right in his interpretation of detail, all this means, alas, that the public image of Lawrence receives

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another dose of falsification. As a Dylan Thomas character would say, he has become now almost irretrievably Lawrence the Sex. Yet only in *Lady Chatterley* and, perhaps, *Rainbow*, is sex the major theme, as the witnesses in the trial were to their distress prevented from pointing out. "No reference to any other works!" was the judge's ruling, but it does not apply to Mr. Sparrow; yet he might have made some reference to Lady Chatterley's place in the evolution of the Lawrence canon, and he seems to suggest that this relatively unsuccessful novel is the climax of his thought and work. What the critics never mention is that in the poems and the novels as a whole, sex is certainly not the predominating theme. One novel is dedicated to the theme of friendship, another to leadership, another to the spirit of place, another to God and religion—themes on which Lawrence is perhaps more effective, though less provocative. But here "Lawrence the Sex" turns up once more, though this time the new coat of paint on the label is rather a dingy one.

STEPHEN POTTER

Savile Club,
London

I DO NOT know whether Goethe studied Cellini as carefully as Mr. Sparrow thinks Lawrence did, but if he will look into Goethe's *Venezianische Epigramme* he will find:

Hab' ich als Mädchen Sie satt, dient Sie als Knabe mir noch....

FRANCOIS BONDY

Paris

From figures on a Grecian urn
The cognoscenti can discern
Precise organic situations,
And hence improper sex relations,
But can a soul-sick Sparrow tell
The orifice that leads to Hell?

R. T.

Cambridge

The Snow Saga

IT IS ODD that Sir Charles Snow "almost fell off his chair" [ENCOUNTER, February] when he heard Earl Attlee say that when the decision was taken to drop the atomic bomb no one had ever mentioned the word "fall-out" to him. Because, if I remember correctly, fall-out is also not mentioned in *The New Men*. I wonder whether Sir Charles' picture may indeed have been correct and that the scientists were more concerned with the size of the explosion than with fall-out.

MICHAEL GORDON

London

DON'T LEAVE IT TO CHANCE

THE January and February issues of ENCOUNTER are both out of print. The February issue vanished from the bookstalls in a few days. We are very sorry indeed that so many people have been disappointed, but we must repeat that a regular order is essential. Your newsagent can deliver ENCOUNTER to you each month, or you can take out a subscription (see page 1).

The Foothold

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[1]Times, [2]Spectator, [3]Time & Tide, [4]Daily Worker, [5]The Bookman.

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Autobiography of a Mexican Family

By Oscar Lewis

Publication in April 36s

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